A

COMPARISON

Between the

French and *Italian*

MUSICK

AND

OPERA'S.

Tranſlated from the *French*;

With ſome REMARKS.

To which is added

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE upon Opera's in *England*, and a Means propoſed for their IMPROVEMENT.

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TO

Her GRACE the

DUTCHESS

OF

Queensberry and *Dover.*

MADAM,

THERE's nothing which ſo reaſonably claims the Protection of the Great and Fair as Poetry and Muſick, and *Your Grace's* Delight and Knowledge in Both are ſo Conſpicuous that there are none concern'd in Either but are proud of Your Patronage.

DEDICATION.

The Fine Taſte which prevails in Muſick is owing to the Favour and Encouragement it has met with from *Your Grace*, and thoſe Ladies, who imitating ſo Bright an Example, have deign'd to make this Beauteous Art not only an Amuſement but a Study. The Innocence of the Pleaſure recommends it in a particular manner to Thoſe, who, like *Your Grace*, can never admit of any which gives the leaſt Offence to Religion and Virtue. And as there's none more Innocent, there's none more Tranſporting; None that Inſpires a more Heav'nly Flame; None that gives ſo lively an Idea of that Happineſs which will be the Reward of Virtue and Religion.

Thoſe who by a too ſcrupulous Affectation of both wou'd baniſh Poetry from the Theatre, dare not treat Muſick ſo ſeverely; That wou'd be to deprive the Fair and Great of a Joy they have ever been moſt touch'd with,

with, and ev'ry Soul that is not Stupid will be always ſenſible of its Charms.

What is there repreſented by the Speaking Muſe ſo Powerful as Harmony? Beauty only has produc'd more Wonders; tho' indeed Beauty is only the Muſick of the Eye, and when with Harmony it unites its Powers, there's nothing in Magick more amazing.

'Tis this makes all the Polite World talk of *Your Grace*, as a Treaſure of which Your Illuſtrious Lord was only worthy; whoſe Labours in the Service of the State were crown'd with that Union, which has fix'd an Eternal Harmony in the Minds of the *Britains*, and render'd Her Majeſty's Reign as Happy to Her People, as Glorious to Her Self and Empire.

That *Your Grace* may continue to Smile on that Muſe, whoſe Higheſt Ambition it is to Pleaſe You, and that her Induſtry may render her more wor-

worthy the Obligations, by which You are always binding her entirely to Your Service; is the Humble and Hearty Wish of,

May it Please Your Grace,

Your Grace's *most Humble,*

most Obedient, and most

Devoted Servant.

A COMPARISON Between the *French* and *Italian* MUSICK.

THERE are ſo many Things wherein the *French* Muſick has the Advantage over the *Italian*, and as many more wherein the *Italian* is ſuperior to the *French*, that, without a particular Examination into the one, and the other, I think it impoſſible to draw a juſt Parallel between 'em, or entertain a right Judgment of either. (1) The Opera's are the Compoſitions that admit of the greateſt Variety and Extent; and they are common both to the *Italians* and *French*. 'Tis in theſe the Maſters of both Nations endeavour, more particularly, to exert themſelves, and make their Genius ſhine:

(1) The *Italians* were the Inventors of the Opera, which the *French* borrow'd from them. *Vid. Menagiana*, Vol. 2. Pag. 167.

And 'tis on theſe therefore I intend to build my preſent Compariſon: But in this there are many Things that require a particular Diſtinction; ſuch as the Language; the Compoſition; the Qualifications of the Actors; thoſe of the Performers; the different Sorts of Voices; the Recitative; the Airs; the Symphonies; the Chorus; the Dance; the Machines; the Decorations; and whatever elſe is eſſential to an Opera, or ſerves to make the Entertainment compleat and perfect. And theſe Things ought to be particularly enquired into, before we can pretend to determine in favour either of the *Italian* or *French*.

Our Opera's are writ much better than the *Italian*; they are regular, coherent Deſigns; and, though repeated without the Muſick, they are as entertaining as any of our other Pieces, that are purely Dramatick: Nothing can be more natural and lively, than their Dialogues; the Gods are made to ſpeak with a Dignity ſuitable to their Character; Kings with all the Majeſty their Rank requires; and the Nymphs and Shepherds with a Softneſs and innocent Mirth, peculiar to the Plains. Love, Jealouſie, Anger, and the reſt of the Paſſions, are touch'd with the greateſt Art and Nicety; and there are few of our Tragedies, or Comedies, that

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appear more beautiful than *Quinault's* Opera's (2).

(3) On the other hand, the *Italian* Opera's are poor, incoherent Rapſodies, with-

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(2) The Author commends *Quinault*, a *French* Poet; and ſo doth Mr. *Menage*, Vol. 2. p. 165. How much *Boileau* is of their Opinion appears in ſeveral Places of his Works, particularly in his ſecond Satyr, addreſs'd to *Moliere*, where we find theſe Verſes:

Si je penſe exprimer un Auteur ſans defaut,
La raiſon dit Virgile, & la Rime Quinault.

(3) Old piec'd-up Opera's are not what fall ſo properly under our Conſideration in this Place: They having been formerly perform'd on ſome other Theatres, are occaſionally fitted up for a preſent Convenience or Neceſſity; and ſeveral Airs are alter'd or omitted, according to the Fancy or Ability of the Singers, without the Approbation or Knowledge of the Compoſer. Sometimes whole Scenes are changed, and are thereby render'd incoherent, and inconſiſtent one with another: This is an Accident, to which old Opera's only are ſubject, when they are reviv'd to anſwer an Emergency, in caſe a new One, that's upon the Stocks, ſhould have the Misfortune to be diſliked. But this Liberty is, by no means, allow'd in a new Opera, where the Singers are not ſuffer'd to alter any thing; but to obſerve, in every particular, the Compoſer's Directions. The Muſick, in theſe Opera's, has, generally ſpeaking, as great a Connexion as the Words: And the Poetry is

without any Connexion or Deſign: All their Pieces, properly ſpeaking, are patch'd up with thin, inſipid Scraps: Their Scenes conſiſt of ſome trivial Dialogues, or Soliloquy; at the end of which they foiſt in one of their beſt Airs, which concludes the Scene. Theſe Airs are ſeldom

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conducted with as much Regularity as the Muſick will admit of; ſeveral Inſtances of which may be ſeen in the Opera's of the Famous Signor *Bernini*, *de Totis*, and *Stampiglia* at *Rome*; *David*, and *Norris* at *Venice*; and many others, who, for Brevity ſake, muſt be omitted. Indeed, I can't think it improper for any Man that undertakes to write an *Opera*, to work upon an *Italian* Plan; the *Italians* being, as I obſerv'd before, the firſt Inventors, and claiming the ſame Advantage, in reſpect of them, as has been allow'd 'em upon Account of *Paſtorals*; ſuch as *Aminta*, *Paſtor Fido*, &c. the Beauties of which others have attempted to imitate, but cou'd never attain 'em; and they ſtill preſerve a Character in the World, maugre all the Pains the Criticks have been at to leſſen their Reputation. I have often obſerv'd, in reading the *Italian Opera's*, that the Heroick Parts are made to ſpeak with Propriety enough; their Thoughts are juſt, and the Style heightned as much as the Nature of the Thing will admit: For a ſtudied Sublimity or Purity in Lines deſign'd for Muſick, is uſeleſs, and improper; ſince the Ear will naturally be more employ'd in liſtning to the Notes, than the Words.

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of a Piece with the reſt of the Opera, being uſually written by other Poets, either occaſionally, or in the Body of ſome other Work. When the Undertaker of an Opera has fix'd himſelf in a Town, and got his Company together, he makes Choice of the Subject he likes beſt; ſuch as *Camilla*, *Themiſtocles*, (4) *Xerxes*, &c. But this Piece, as I juſt now obſerv'd, is no better than a Patch-Work, larded with the beſt Airs his Performers are acquainted with; which Airs are like Saddles, fit for all Horſes alike; They are Declarations of Love made on one ſide, and embraced or rejected on the other; Tranſports of Happy Lovers, or Complaints of the Unfortunate; Proteſtations of Fidelity, or Stings of Jealouſie; Raptures of Pleaſure, or Pangs of Sorrow, Rage, and Deſpair: And one of theſe Airs you are ſure to find at the end of every Scene. Now certainly ſuch a Medley as this can never be ſet in Competition with our Opera's, which are wrought up with great Exactneſs and marvellous Conduct.

Beſides, our Opera's have a farther Advantage over the *Italian*, in reſpect of the

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(4) *Xerxes* is an *Opera* of *Bononcini's*, perform'd on the Theatre of *Tordinona* in *Rome*; but it did not take.

Voice, and that is the (5) Baſe; which is ſo frequent among us, and ſo rarely to be met with in *Italy*: For every Man, that has an Ear, will witneſs with me, that nothing can be more Charming than a good Baſe; the ſimple Sound of theſe Baſes, which ſometimes ſeems to ſink into a profound Abyſs, has ſomething wonderfully Charming in it. The Air receives a ſtronger Concuſſion from theſe deep Voices, than it doth from thoſe that are higher, and is conſequently fill'd with a more agreeable and extenſive Harmony. When the Perſons of Gods or Kings, a *Jupiter*, *Neptune*, *Priam* or *Agamemnon*, are brought on the Stage, our Actors, with their deep Voices, give 'em an Air of Majeſty, quite different from that of

(5) I can't think the Baſe-Voice more proper for a King, a Hero, or any other diſtinguiſh'd Perſon, than the Counter-tenor, ſince the Difference of the Voice in Man is meerly accidental. And as the Abilities of a Man's Mind are not meaſur'd by his Stature, ſo certainly we are not to judge of a Heroe by his Voice: For this Reaſon I can't ſee why the Part of *Cæſar* or *Alexander* may not properly enough be perform'd by a Counter-tenor or Tenor, or any other Voice; provided the Performer, in Acting as well as Singing, is able to maintain the Dignity of the Character he repreſents.

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the feign'd Baſes among the *Italians*, which have neither Depth nor Strength. Beſides, the interfering of the Baſes with the upper Parts forms an agreeable Contraſt, and makes us perceive the Beauties of the one by the Oppoſition they meet with from the other; a Pleaſure to which the *Italians* are perfect Strangers; the Voices of their Singers, who are, for the moſt part, *Caſtrati*, being perfectly like thoſe of their Women.

Beſides the Advantages we claim from the Beauty of our Deſigns, and the Variety of Voices, we receive ſtill more from our (6) Chorus, Dances, and other Enter-

(6) I readily agree with the Author in what he ſaith, relating to the *Italian* Dances; and I muſt confeſs I think he has not given 'em ſo ill a Character as they deſerve: However, I can by no means approve the unſeaſonable Interruptions the the *French* Opera's receive from their Chorus's, and Dances, which frequently top upon the Muſick; but this muſt be imputed to the Advantage theſe ſort of Entertainments have in the Opinion of the *French*, who generally prefer 'em to Muſick. And I think it highly reaſonable, without condemning the Taſte either of the one or the other Nation, to leave the Matter as it ſtands between 'em: Though I can't but obſerve, that the Paſtoral Opera, perform'd ſome time ſince on our *Engliſh* Stage, call'd *Love's Tri-*

Entertainments, in which we infinitely excell the *Italians*. They, inſtead of theſe Decorations, which furniſh our Opera's with an agreeable Variety, and give 'em a peculiar Air of Grandure and Magnificence, have uſually nothing but (7) ſome burleſque Scenes of a Buffoon; ſome Old

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umph, though the Compoſition was *Italian*, yet being directed by one who can't compoſe himſelf, and is conſequently improper for ſuch an Undertaking, being fit only to ſing when his Voice will permit him; I ſay, this Paſtoral being ſtuff'd out with Dance and Chorus, after the *French* Faſhion, was ſo diſreliſh'd by the Audience, that the ſecond Night of its Repreſentation, the whole Town in a manner forſook it, and left the Undertaker to ſit down with the Loſs, after the vaſt Expences he had been at in faſhioning it for the Stage. This is an Inſtance of the nice Taſte of the *Engliſh*, who cou'd not endure an *Italian* Piece *Frenchefied* as this was, but conſider'd Opera purely as a Muſical Invention, able to ſubſiſt without Dances, which are adventitious, whereas Muſick is eſſential to it.

(7) As for their Comical Parts, they are very entertaining, when juſtly perform'd; and the Author himſelf gives the *Italian* Comedians an extraordinary Character towards the latter End of this Diſcourſe. I'm of Opinion ſuch Parts may be naturally enough introduced in Opera's, where the Rules are not ſo ſtrict as in Tragedies, or Comedies: A too ſtrict Obedience to the Decorum is in-

Old Woman that's to be in Love with a young Footman; or a Conjurer that ſhall turn a Cat into a Bird, a Fidler into an Owl, and play a few other Tricks of Legerdemain, that are only fit to divert the Mob. And for their Dancers they are the pooreſt Creatures in the World; they are all of a Lump, without Arms, Legs, a Shape or Air.

(8) As to the Inſtruments; our Maſters touch the Violin much finer, and with a greater Nicety than they do in *Italy*.

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inconſiſtent with that Latitude which Muſick neceſſarily requires, though 'tis obſervable in *Camilla*, that the Comical Parts mingle very naturally with the ſerious, without any Interruption of the Story. The Author of the Words in *Camilla* is *Silvio Stampiglia*, a *Roman* by Birth, at preſent Poet to his Imperial Majeſty; and the Muſick was compoſed by *Giovanni Bononcini*, Muſician of the Chamber to the ſame Prince.

(8) 'Tis evident, in this Place, the Author was unwilling to diſoblige his Countrymen: However, though he ſeems at preſent to give the Preference to their Inſtruments, we ſhall ſee hereafter how advantageous a Diſtinction he makes in behalf of the *Italians*. As for the Flute and Haut-Bois, we have Maſters at the Opera in *London*, that need not give Place to any at *Paris*: To prove which Aſſertion I will only mention the famous Mr. *Paiſible*, and Mr. *Banniſter*, for the firſt, and Mr. *Lulliet* for the ſecond.

Ev'ry

Ev'ry Stroke of their Bow ſounds harſh, if broken, and diſagreeable, if continued. Moreover, beſides all the Inſtruments that are common to us, as well as the *Italians*, we have the Haut-bois; which, by their Sounds, equally mellow and piercing, have infinitely the Advantage of the Violins, in all brisk, lively Airs; and the Flutes, which ſo many of our great * Artiſts have taught to groan after ſo moving a manner, in our moanful Airs, and ſigh ſo amorouſly in thoſe that are Tender.

* *Philbert, Philidor, Deſcoteaux,* and *les Hoteterres.*

(9) In ſhort, we have the Advantage

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(9) 'Tis not to be deny'd, but the Habits in the Opera at *Paris* are infinitely finer, richer, and better made than in any other Part of the World; the Reaſon of this is plain; for the King will have every new Opera perform'd the firſt time at Court, at his own Expence, and orders all the Cloaths for the Singers, and Dancers himſelf: Theſe Cloaths are afterwards uſed in the Publick Repreſentations on the Theatre, where they make an extraordinary Show, as they well may, being all right Gold and Silver, and having coſt the King a prodigious Sum of Mony: Notwithſtanding which, though the *Italian* Habits are all falſe, and coſt very little, yet you obſerve a peculiar Deſign and Elegance in 'em; and being made new to every Opera, and every Seaſon, they make a good Appearance, and are by no means to be deſpiſed.

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of 'em in Dreſs. Our Habits infinitely excell all we ſee Abroad, both in Coſtlineſs and Fancy. The *Italians* themſelves will own, that no Dancers in *Europe* are equal to ours; the *Combatants* and *Cyclops* in *Perſeus*; the *Tremblers* and *Smiths* in *Iſis*; the *Unlucky Dreams* in *Atis*, and our other Entries, are Originals in their kind, as well in reſpect of the Airs, compos'd by *Lully*, as of the Steps which *Beauchamp* has adapted to thoſe Airs. The Theatre produced nothing like it 'till thoſe two great Men appear'd: 'Tis an Entertainment of which they are the ſole Inventors, and they have carried it to ſo high a Degree of Perfection, that as no Perſon either in *Italy*, or elſewhere, has hitherto rival'd 'em, ſo, I fear, the World will never produce their Equal. No Theatre can repreſent a Fight more lively, than we ſee it ſometimes expreſs'd in our Dances: And, in a Word, ev'ry thing is perform'd with an unexceptionable Nicety: The Conduct and Economy, through the whole, is ſo admirable, that no Man, of common Underſtanding, will deny, but that the *French* Opera's form a more lively Repreſentation than the *Italian*, and that a meer Spectator muſt be much better pleas'd in *France* than *Italy*. This is the Sum of what can be offer'd

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to our Advantage, in behalf of our Muſick and Opera's; let us now examine wherein the *Italians* have the Advantage over us in theſe two Points.

Their Language is much more naturally adapted to Muſick than ours; their Vowels are all ſonorous, whereas above half of ours are Mute, or at beſt bear a very ſmall part in Pronunciation; ſo that, in the firſt place, no Cadence, or beautiful Paſſage, can be form'd upon the Syllables that conſiſt of thoſe Vowels; and, in the next, the Words are expreſs'd by halves; ſo that we are left to gueſs at what the *French* are ſinging, whereas the *Italian* is perfectly underſtood. Beſides, though all the *Italian* Vowels are full and open, yet the Compoſers chuſe out of them ſuch as they judge moſt proper for their fineſt Diviſions. They generally make Choice of the Vowel *A*, which being clearer and more diſtinct than any of the reſt, expreſſes the Beauty of the Cadence, and Diviſion, to a better Advantage: Whereas (10) we make uſe of all the Vowels indifferently, thoſe that are

(10) The *Engliſh* Singers are guilty of much the ſame Fault; they make their Diviſions without any Choice upon the Vowel *O*, *I* and *U*, indifferently. This is a vicious Habit, and they would do well to break themſelves of it.

mute,

mute, as well as thoſe that are ſonorous; nay, very often we pitch upon a Diphthong, as in the Words *Chaine*, and *Gloire*; which Syllables, conſiſting of two Vowels join'd together, create a confus'd Sound, and want that Clearneſs and Beauty that we find in the ſimple Vowels. But this is not the moſt material Part to be conſider'd in Muſick: Let us now examine into its Eſſence, and Form; that is, the Structure of the Airs, either diſtinctly conſider'd, or in Relation to the different Parts; of which the whole Compoſition conſiſts.

The *Italians* are more bold and hardy in their Airs, than the *French*; they carry their Point farther, both in their tender Songs, and thoſe that are more ſprightly, as well as in their other Compoſitions: Nay, they often unite Stiles, which the *French* think incompatible. The *French*, in thoſe Compoſitions that conſiſt of many Parts, ſeldom regard more than that which is principal (11); where-

(11) The *Italians*, in their Compoſitions of three or four Parts, take care, as the Author well obſerves, to have all the Parts equally beautiful; unlike the *French*, who think they have done their Buſineſs if the upper-part and the Baſe prove good; whilſt the other Parts are crowded in without any Deſign or Fore-ſight, and muſt conſequently be very inſipid,

whereas the *Italians* uſually ſtudy to make all the Parts equally ſhining, and beautiful. In ſhort, the Invention of the one is inexhauſtible; but the Genius of the other is narrow and conſtrain'd: This the Reader will fully underſtand when we deſcend to Particulars.

It is not to be wonder'd that the *Italians* think our Muſick dull and ſtupifying, that, according to their Taſte, it appears flat and inſipid, if we conſider the nature of the *French* Airs compar'd to thoſe of the *Italian*. The *French* in their Airs aim at the Soft, the Eaſie, the Flowing, and Coherent; the whole Air is of the ſame Tone, or if ſometimes they venture to vary it, they do it with ſo many Preparations, they ſo qualifie it, that ſtill the Air ſeems to be as natural and conſiſtent as if they had attempted no change at all; there is nothing bold and adventurous in it, it's all equal, and of a Piece. (12) But the *Italians* paſs bold-

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ſipid, and ineffectual; whereas the *Italian* Compoſer ſuffers nothing to paſs without being firſt well conſider'd, and digeſted: So that beſides the Beauty and Sprightlineſs that attends ev'ry Air, a regular Judgment and Conduct appears through the whole, which never fails of Applauſe.

(12) An Inſtance of this change of the Key in the *Italian* Airs, is particularly to be found in an Air of *Gaſpa-*

boldly, and in an Inſtant from *b* Sharp to *b* Flat, and from *b* Flat to *b* Sharp; they venture the boldeſt Cadences, and the moſt irregular Diſſonance; and their Airs are ſo out

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Gaſparini's, in the Opera of *Clotilda*, viz. (*del' fallo ſul' camin*) but we muſt obſerve, that the moſt beautiful Part of that Song was omitted by the Singer, which call'd his Judgment into queſtion, and blemiſh'd his Reputation; nay, he wou'd willingly have left out the whole Air, alledging it to be a Compoſition not proper for the Theatre, and conſequently not like to pleaſe the Audience, tho', contrary to his Opinion, it met with a general Applauſe; for which Reaſon, we are to conſult the Original, and not the Copy Printed here in *London*, where, as we obſerv'd before, the moſt beautiful of all the Muſick is wanting in the ſecond Part; upon theſe Words (*d' Eccеſſo in altro Eccеſſo*) where, with an inexpreſſible Boldneſs, and an extraordinary Judgment, the Compoſer has hit upon the ſenſe of the Words; and the Vocal Muſick rolls with a perpetual Harſhneſs, whilſt the Violins without any interruption continue the firſt Subject, and introduce the former part of the Air again with an admirable Judgment, which ſhows him to be a great Artiſt.

Two Songs in *Pyrrhus* and *Demetrius* bear a near Reſemblance to the Compoſition before mention'd, *viz. Veder parmi un ombra nera*, &c. and *Germana addio*; both of 'em Compos'd by the Famous *Scarlatti*; where, beſides the great Harmony there is between the Inſtruments and the Vocal Part, you will find an inimitable Modulation, and

out of the way that they reſemble the Compoſitions of no other Nation in the World.

The *French* wou'd think themſelves undone, if they offended in the leaſt againſt the Rules; they Flatter, Tickle, and court the Ear, and are ſtill doubtful of Succeſs, tho' ev'ry thing be done with an exact Regularity. The more hardy *Italian* changes the Tone and the Mode without any Awe or Heſitation, he makes double or treble Cadences of ſeven or eight Bars together, upon Tones we ſhou'd think incapable of the leaſt Diviſion. He'll make a * *Swelling* of ſo prodigious a Length, that they who are unacquainted with it can't chuſe but be offended at firſt to ſee him ſo adventurous; but before he has done,

* *By the* Italians *call'd* Meſſe di Voce.

I believe they are two of the moſt Maſterly Airs that ever were Compos'd for the Theatre. Of the ſame kind are two Airs of *Bononcini* in *Camilla*, viz. (*Conſiglio ed Aita*) and (*Amo per ſervir*) but they are not of an equal ſtrength with the two before-mention'd.

One can't comprehend the Meaning of this Artful Harſhneſs in Muſick better, than by obſerving ſome of the Recitative in *Scarlatti*'s *Cantata's*, where he makes uſe of all ſorts of Diſſonance to expreſs the force of the Words, and afterwards Reſolves 'em ſo well that indeed the moſt beautiful Concords are hardly ſo ſweet and harmonious as his Diſcords.

they'll

they'll think they can't ſufficiently admire him: He'll have Paſſages of ſuch an Extent, as will perfectly confound his Auditors at firſt; and upon ſuch irregular Tones as ſhall inſtill a Terror as well as Surprize into the Audience, who will immediately conclude, that the whole Concert is degenerating into a dreadful Diſſonance, and betraying 'em by that means into a concern for the Muſick, which ſeems to be upon the brink of Ruin, he immediately reconciles 'em by ſuch regular Cadences that ev'ry one is ſurpriz'd to ſee Harmony riſing again in a manner out of Diſcord it ſelf, and owing its greateſt Beauties to thoſe Irregularities which ſeem'd to threaten it with Deſtruction. The *Italians* venture at ev'ry thing that is harſh, and out of the way, but then they do it like People that have a right to venture, and are ſure of Succeſs. Under a Notion of being the greateſt and moſt abſolute Maſters of Muſick in the World, like Deſpotick Soveraigns, they diſpenſe with its Rules in hardy but fortunate Sallies; they exert themſelves above the Art, but like Maſters of that Art, whoſe Laws they follow, or tranſgreſs at Pleaſure: they inſult the niceneſs of the Ear which others court, they defie and compel it; they maſter and Conquer it with Charms, which owe

 their

their irreſiſtible force to the Boldneſs of the adventurous Compoſer.

Sometimes we meet with a *Swelling*, to which the firſt Notes of the Thorough-Baſe Jarr ſo harſhly, as the Ear is highly offended with it; but the Baſe continuing to Play on, returns at laſt to the *Swelling* with ſuch beautiful Intervals, that we quickly diſcover the Compoſer's Deſign in the choice of thoſe Diſcords, was to give the Hearer a more true and perfect Reliſh of the Raviſhing Notes that on a ſudden reſtore the whole Harmony.

Let a *Frenchman* be ſet to Sing one of theſe Diſſonances, and he'll want Courage enough to ſupport it with that Reſolution wherewith it muſt be ſuſtain'd to make it ſucceed; his Ear being accuſtom'd to the moſt ſoft and natural Intervals, is ſtartled at ſuch an Irregularity; he Trembles and is in a Sweat whilſt he attempts to Sing it; (13) whereas the *Italians*, who are innur'd from their Youth to theſe Diſſonances,

(13) How familiar Muſick is to the *Italians*, may clearly be ſeen here in *London*, without going into *Italy* for a Proof of it, I mean in the Perſon of the famous *Cavaliero Nicolino di Napoli*, who with his moſt charming Voice, and that great Uſe and Skill he hath in Muſick, never Sings but he captivates his Audience, and ſometimes Lanches out into

ces, Sing the moſt irregular Notes with the ſame aſſurance they wou'd the moſt Beautiful, and perform ev'ry thing with a Confidence that ſecures 'em of Succeſs.

Muſick is become exceeding common in *Italy*; the *Italians* Sing from their Cradles, they Sing at all Times and Places; a Natural Uniform Song is too vulgar for their Ears. Such Airs are to them like Things taſteleſs, and decay'd: If you would hit their Palat, you muſt regale it with Variety, and be continually paſſing from one Key to another, though you venture at the moſt uncommon, and unnatural Paſſages: Without this you'll be unable to keep 'em awake, or excite their Attention. But to be more particular,

As the *Italians* are naturally much more brisk than the *French*, ſo are they more ſenſible of the Paſſions, and conſequent-

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into ſuch Diviſions, and *Swellings*, as one wou'd think it impoſſible for him to get clear again; and yet, after having held the Audience in ſome Suſpence, he changes the Concern they had for the Muſick into ſo great a Pleaſure, that they are forced to vent the Oppreſſion they had receiv'd from ſuch a Contrariety, in an Univerſal Applauſe. He is no leſs bold in the Performance, than *Scarlatti* is in the Compoſition; but they both know their own Strength, and how to get clear of what they undertake.

ly expreſs 'em more lively in all their Productions. (14) If a Storm, or Rage, is to be deſcrib'd in a Symphony, their Notes gives us ſo natural an Idea of it, that our Souls can hardly receive a ſtronger Impreſſion from the Reality than they do from the Deſcription; every thing is ſo brisk and piercing, ſo impetuous and affecting, that the Imagination, the Senſes, the Soul, and the Body it ſelf are all betray'd into a general Tranſport; 'tis impoſſible not to be born down with the Rapidity of theſe Movements: A Symphony of Furies ſhakes the Soul; it undermines and overthrows it in ſpite of all its

(14) Of this kind is the Scene which *Nicolini* added to *Pyrrhus* and *Demetrius*, the laſt Time it was perform'd, and afterward ſung in his own Conſort. This Scene was compos'd by *Scarlatti*, in an Opera call'd *Roſaura*, perform'd at *Rome* on *Capranica*'s Theatre, where *Nicolini* perform'd *Roſaura*'s Part to the Admiration of all that ſaw him. This Scene, notwithſtanding its Excellent Muſick, wou'd have been eſteem'd as nothing, had it not been perform'd by one ſo perfect in the Art of Acting, as *Nicolini* is. By this we may make an Eſtimate of the Compoſer's Judgment, in fitting the Part for his Performer; and the Performer is no leſs to be admired in forcing an Applauſe for that, which, had another perform'd it, would probably have fallen far ſhort of it.

Care;

Care; the (15) Artiſt himſelf, whilſt he is performing it, is ſeiz'd with an unavoidable Agony, he tortures his Violin, he racks his Body; he is no longer Maſter of himſelf, but is agitated like one poſſeſt with an irreſiſtable Motion.

If, on the other ſide, the Symphony is to expreſs a Calm and Tranquility, which requires a quite different Style, they however execute it with an equal Succeſs: Here the Notes deſcend ſo low, that the Soul is ſwallow'd with 'em in the profound Abyſs. Every String of the Bow is of an infinite Length, ling'ring on a dying Sound, which decays gradually 'till at laſt it abſolutely expires. Their Symphonies of Sleep inſenſibly ſteal the Soul from the Body, and ſo ſuſpend its Faculties, and Operations, that being bound up as it were in the Harmony, that entirely poſſeſſes and enchants it, it's as dead to every thing elſe, as if all its Powers were captivated by a real Sleep.

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(15) I never met with any Man that ſuffer'd his Paſſions to hurry him away ſo much, whilſt he was playing on the Violin, as the famous *Arcangelo Corelli*; whoſe Eyes will ſometimes turn as red as Fire; his Countenance will be diſtorted, his Eye-Balls roll as in an Agony, and he gives in ſo much to what he is doing that he doth not look like the ſame Man.

In ſhort, as for the Conformity of the Air with the Senſe of the Words, I never heard any Symphony comparable to that which was perform'd at *Rome* in (16) the Oratory of St. *Jerome* of Charity, on St. *Martin*'s Day in the Year 1697, upon theſe two Words *Mille Saette*. The Air conſiſted of diſ-jointed Notes, like thoſe in a Jigg, which gave the Soul a lively Impreſſion of an Arrow; and that wrought ſo effectually upon the Imagination, that every Violin appear'd to be a Bow, and their Bows were like ſo many flying Arrows, darting their pointed Heads upon every part of the Symphony. Nothing can be more maſterly, or more happily expreſs'd. (17) So that be their Airs either of a ſprightly or gentle Style, let 'em

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(16) And yet the beſt Entertainments are not to be met with in this Place, in reſpect either of the Muſick or the Singers. Here ſome Scripture Stories, ſet to Muſick, are perform'd every Holy-Day-Night, from *All-Saints* to *Eaſter*: A laudable Inſtitution, deſign'd to reſtrain the Populace from more guilty Diverſions.

(17) It will not be improper to inſert in this Place ſome Examples of the ſeveral different Sorts of *Italian* Airs, as they are diſtinguiſh'd by the Author; that is, into Brisk lively Airs, Tender Airs, Impetuous Airs, Languiſhing Airs, and ſuch

'em be impetuous or languiſhing; in all theſe the *Italians* are equally preferrable to the *French*: But there is one thing beyond

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ſuch as are tender and lively at the ſame, as that by him mentioned, *Mai non ſi vedde ancor.* But that the Reader may have a more familiar View of 'em, I'll make Choice only of the Airs in *Camilla*, and *Pyrrhus* and *Demetrius*.

Brisk lively Airs.

Fortune, ever known to vary, *&c.*
Amore M' infiamma col' Lampo, &c.
Love and Ambition ſtrive, *&c.*
Chi cede al' furore di ſtelle, &c.
Si, ſi, mi Baſta ſi, &c.
Anger's for War declaring, *&c.*
} *Camil.*

Sento più doler il vento, &c.
Too lovely cruel Fair, *&c.*
Tho' Nature ſtrives t' oppoſe, *&c.*
O' gratie accorete, &c.
Due Pupille che ſono due ſtelle, &c.
Corri o' ſole per pieta, &c.
For me Love has decreed her, *&c.*
Per te Cara nel' petto, &c.
} *Pyrrhus.*

Tender Airs.

Since you from Death thus ſave me, *&c.*
Charming Fair, *&c.*
} *Camil.*

yond all this, which neither the *French*, nor any other Nation, beſides themſelves, in the World, ever attempted; for they will

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In vain I fly from Sorrow, *&c.*
No Love was ever known, *&c.*
Around her ſee *Cupid* flying, *&c.*
Cupid, oh! at length reward me, *&c.* } *Camil.*
The Floods ſhall quit the Ocean, *&c.*
Dangers every way ſurround me. *&c.*
Ceaſe cruel Tyrannizing, *&c.*

Vieni o Sonno, &c.
S' hà pieta del mio dolore, &c.
Se non foſſe' la Speranza, &c.
Gentle Sighs, *&c.* } *Pyrrhus.*
Thus with Thirſt my Soul expiring, *&c.*
Piu Cara, cara del' core, &c.
Suſſurrandoil zeffiretto, &c.

Impetuous Airs.

Revenge I ſummon, *&c.*
Love and Ambition, *&c.* } *Camil.*
Let the Lightning flaſhing, *&c.*

I feel my doubtful Mind, *&c.*
No Forces ſhall ſcare me, *&c* } *Pyrrhus.*
Son guerriero e' ſon' amante, &c.

That

will ſometimes unite in a moſt ſurprizing Manner, the Tender with the Sprightly, as may be inſtanced in that celebrated Air,

That which Love denies me, *&c.*
M' Ingannaſti, O Crudo Igrato, &c.
Barbarous! Inſolent! *&c.*
Ungrateful Traitor go, *&c.*
Furie dell' Erebo, &c.
} *Pyrrhus.*

Languiſhing Airs.

Welcome Sorrow, Death attending, *&c.*
See the juſt Gods of Innocence, *&c.*
Ungrateful you fly me, *&c.*
} *Camil.*

Tortorella che Reſta ſola, &c.
My Sorrows unrelenting, *&c.*
Dammi ò prendi ò caro almen, &c.
Veder parmi un Ombra Nera, &c.
Strike deep and kill a hopeleſs Lover, *&c.*
E quando o Cruda ſorte, &c.
Germano, addio, &c.
} *Pyrrhus.*

Airs that are Tender and Lively at the ſame time.

Mai non ſi vide ancor, &c.
I love, but dare not, *&c.*
} *Camil.*

In vain are Sighs to move us, *&c.*
Per te gia ſento in petto, &c.
} *Pyrrhus.*

Mai

Mai non ſi vidde ancor piu bella fedelta, &c. which is the ſofteſt and moſt tender of any in the World, and yet its Symphony is as lively, and piecrcing as ever was compoſed: Theſe different Characters are they able to unite ſo artfully, that, far from deſtroying a Contrary by its Contrary, they make the one ſerve to embelliſh the other.

But if we now proceed from the ſimple Airs to a Conſideration of thoſe Pieces that conſiſt of ſeveral Parts, we there ſhall find the mighty Advantages the *Italians* have over the *French*. I never met with a Maſter in *France*, but what agreed, that the *Italians* knew much better how to turn, and vary a *Trio* than the *French*. Among us the firſt upper Part is generally beautiful enough; but then the ſecond uſually deſcends too low to deſerve our Attention. In *Italy* the upper Parts are generally three or four Notes higher than in *France*; ſo that their Seconds are high enough to have as much Beauty as the very Firſt with us. Beſides, all their three Parts are ſo equally good, that it is often difficult to find which is the Subject. *Lully* has compoſed ſome after this manner, but they are few in Number, whereas we hardly meet with any in *Italy* that are otherwiſe.

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But in Compoſitions conſiſting of more Parts than three, the Advantages of the *Italian* Maſters will ſtill appear greater. In *France* it's ſufficient if the Subject be beautiful, we very rarely find that the Parts which accompany it are ſo much as coherent: We have ſome Thorough-Baſes indeed which are good Grounds; and which, for that Reaſon, are highly extoll'd by us: But where this happens the upper Parts grow very poor, they give way to the Baſe, which then becomes the Subject. As for the Accompaniments of the Violin, they are for the moſt part nothing but ſingle Strokes of the Bow, heard by Intervals, without any uniform coherent Muſick, ſerving only to expreſs, from time to time, a few Accords. Whereas in *Italy*, the firſt and ſecond upper Part, the Thorough-Baſe, and all the other Parts that concur to the Compoſition of the fulleſt Pieces, are equally finiſh'd. The Parts for the Violins are uſually as beautiful as the Air it ſelf: So that after we have deen entertain'd with ſomething very charming in the Air, we are inſenſibly captivated by the Parts that accompany it, which are equally engaging, and make us quit the Subject to liſten to them: Every thing is ſo exactly beautiful, that it's difficult to find out the principal Part. Sometimes the

the Thorough-Baſe lays ſo faſt hold of our Ear, that in liſt'ning to it we forget the Subject; at other times the Subject is ſo inſinuating, that we no longer regard the Baſe, when all on a ſudden the Violins become ſo raviſhing, that we mind neither the Baſe, nor the Subject. 'Tis too much for one Soul to taſt the ſeveral Beauties of ſo many Parts: She muſt multiply her ſelf before ſhe can reliſh and digeſt three or four Delights at once, which are all beautiful alike; 'tis Tranſport, Inchantment, and extaſie of Pleaſure; her Faculties are upon ſo great a Stretch, ſhe's forced to eaſe her ſelf by Exclamations; ſhe waits impatiently for the End of the Air, that ſhe may have a breathing room; (18) ſhe ſometimes finds it impoſſible to wait ſo long, and then the Muſick

(18) Though the Applauſe *Nicolino Grimaldi* has deſervedly receiv'd at *London* for his performing the Part of *Pyrrhus*, be extraordinary, yet it is far ſhort of what he has met with in *Rome*, *Venice*, &c. Which is not to be wonder'd at, when we conſider the *Engliſh* are not yet thoroughly acquainted with the Beauties of the *Italian* Muſick, and the force of their Words, and conſequently they can't be proper Judges of the Action that is apply'd to thoſe Words: Beſides, the *Engliſh* Stage is not accuſtom'd to ſuch Acclamations,

Muſick is interrupted by an univerſal Applauſe. Theſe are the daily Effects of the *Italian* Compoſition, which every one that has been in *Italy* can abundantly teſtifie; we meet with the like in no other Nation whatſoever: They are Beauties improv'd to ſuch a Degree of Excellence, as not to be reach'd by the Imagination, 'till maſter'd by the Underſtanding; and when they are underſtood our Imaginations can form nothing beyond 'em.

(19) To conclude, the *Italians* are inexhauſtible in their Productions of ſuch Pieces as are Compos'd of ſeveral Parts, in which on the other ſide the *French* are extreamly

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tions, which are the Effects of Madneſs more than Pleaſure. It is to be obſerv'd, that *Nicolino* is the Chief Actor in *Italy*.

(19) *Aleſſandro Scarlatti* is a Prodigy of Muſick, his Head is a perfect Magazine. Beſides near a hundred Opera's that he has Compos'd for the Stage, he has ſet an infinite number of * *Oratorio's*, *Cantata*'s and *Serenades* to Muſick; and that with ſuch an incredible quickneſs, that it's impoſſible for any Copiſt to write ſo faſt as he Compoſeth, and yet he varies ſo much in his Style, that ev'ry New Opera ſeems the Work of ſome new Compoſer, but then his Genius is ſo copious that it's never to be tired or exhauſted. We ſhou'd not imagine them to be his, was it not for a certain Sublimity in his Deſign, which diſtinguiſhes him from all the reſt of the World beſides, and appears even in his moſt trivial Compoſitions.

* *A pi of Sacre Hiſtory Compos' in three four Pa*

limited

limited. In *France* the Compoſer thinks he has done his Buſineſs, if he can diverſifie the Subject; as for the Accompaniments, you find nothing like it in them; they are all upon the ſame Chords, the ſame Cadence, where you ſee all at once, without any Variety or Surprize. The *French* Compoſers ſteal from one another, or Copy from their own Works, ſo that all their Compoſitions are much alike. Whereas the *Italian* Invention is infinite, both for the Quantity, and Diverſity of their Airs; the number of 'em may modeſtly be ſaid to be without Number; and yet it will be very difficult to find two among 'em all that are alike. We are daily admiring *Lully*'s fertile Genius in the Compoſition of ſo many beautiful different Airs. *France* never produced a Maſter that had a Talent like him; this I'm ſure no one will contradict, and this is all I deſire, to make it appear how much the *Italians* are ſuperior to the *French*, both for the Invention, and Compoſition; for, in ſhort, this great Man, whoſe Works we ſet in Competition with thoſe of the greateſt Maſters in *Italy*, was himſelf an *Italian*. He has excell'd all our Muſicians in the Opinion of the *French* themſelves. To eſtabliſh therefore an Equality between the two Nations, we ought to produce ſome

French-

Frenchman, who has in the ſame manner excell'd the greateſt Maſters in *Italy*, and that by the Confeſſion of the *Italians* themſelves; but this is an Inſtance we have not yet been able to produce. Beſides, *Lully* is the only Man ever appear'd in *France* with a Genius ſo ſuperior for Muſick; whereas (20) *Italy* abounds in Maſters, the

(20) Among the ancient Compoſers of Church Muſick, beſides *Cariſſimi*, we may add, *Oratio Benevoli*, and *Franciſco Foggia*, and one more ancient than either, *Paleſtrina*, who was the Inventor of a Style in Muſick, call'd from his own Name, *alla Paleſtrina*, or rather *à Capella*, being the only Style ſuffer'd to be perform'd in the Pope's Chappel, a Style which none but *Paleſtrina* cou'd Invent, ſo none but *Foggia* has been ever able to Copy after him. Theſe Compoſitions conſiſt of four or five Parts. *Oratio Benevoli* was the Author of four Chorus's, or ſixteen real Parts, every Chorus conſiſting of four Parts each. This *Benevoli* has been ſo far from being excell'd by any Maſters ſince, that no one hitherto has been able to Rival him. *Cariſſimi*'s Excellence las in Compoſitions of two Chorus's, or eight Parts, as likewiſe for Chamber Songs accommodated to the guſt of the Age he lived in.

Franciſco Foggia has moreover Compos'd Excellent Church Muſick of four or five Parts, in the ſame Style with *Paleſtrina*, and has even excell'd him. Among the Moderns, we find *Colonna*, and *Perti* at *Bologna*, *Legrenzi* at *Venice*, *Franciſco Graſſi*,

the worſt of which may be compar'd to him; they are to be found at *Rome*, *Naples*, *Florence*, *Venice*, *Bologna*, *Milan*, and *Turin*, in which Places there has been a long Succeſſion of them. They have had their *Luigi*, their *Cariſſimi*, their *Melani*, and their *Legrenzi*; to theſe Succeeded their *Buononcini*, their *Corelli*, and their

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Graſſi, call'd *Baſſetto*, *Ottavio Pitoni*, and *Melani* at *Rome*, *Baſſani* at *Ferrara*, with ſeveral others.

For the Opera and Cantata's, the firſt were *Luigi Roſſi*, *Ceſti*, and *Cariſſimi*; after them *Celano*, *Stradella*, and *Pier' Simone Auguſtini*, who have been Excellent in their Style, and ſomething more Modern than the firſt, and whoſe Works abound with many things worthily to be admir'd.

After them, and to give the laſt Hand to the Perfection of *Italian* Muſick for Opera's and Cantata's, ſucceeded the abovemention'd *Scarlatti*, the firſt Inventor of the Songs accompanied by the Violin alone, and other Compoſitions very much to be commended. *Pollaroli* the *Venetian* invented the Uniſon Arietto's, which Invention has been follow'd by the moſt celebrated Compoſers, and is at preſent one of the greateſt Beauties in the *Italian* Opera's. To thoſe may be added *Perti*, *Bononcini*, *Gaſparini*, and many more who are much in Vogue in *Italy*.

For the Symphonies, we may boldly ſay *Corelli* has ſet a Pattern to all the World, there being not one of his that is Printed but what is Excellent in its kind. After him may be mention'd *Baldaſſini*, *Torelli*, *Baſſani* and *Albinoni*, &c.

Baſſani,

Baſſani, who are ſtill Living, and Charm all *Europe* with their Excellent Productions. The firſt ſeem'd to have rob'd the Art of all her Beauties; and yet thoſe that follow'd have at leaſt Rivall'd 'em in an infinite number of Works of a Stamp perfectly New; they grow up there ev'ry Day, and ſeem to claim the Laurel from their Predeceſſors; they are Flouriſhing in all Parts of *Italy*, whereas in *France*, a Maſter like one of them, is lookt on as a *Phœnix*; the whole Realm has been able to produce but one in an Age, and 'tis to be fear'd, no Age hereafter will ever be able to ſupply the Loſs of *Lully*. 'Tis therefore undeniably evident, that the *Italian* Genius for Muſick is incomparably preferable to that of the *French*.

We have had no Maſterly Compoſitions in *France* ſince *Lully*'s Death, ſo that all true Lovers of Muſick muſt deſpair of any New Entertainments among us; but if they take the Pains to go into *Italy*, I'll anſwer for 'em, let their Heads be never ſo full of the *French* Compoſitions they'll renounce 'em all that they may have room enough for the *Italian* Airs, which bear not the leaſt reſemblance to thoſe in *France*, tho' this is an Aſſertion no one can rightly comprehend, that has not been in *Italy*; for the *French* have no

Notion of any thing fine in Muſick that doth not reſemble ſome of their Favorite Airs.

Theſe are the Advantages the *Italians* have over the *French*, in Point of Muſick generally conſider'd. Let us now Examine wherein they excel 'em in Relation to the Opera's. And that ſome Order may be obſerv'd in the Examination of ſo many things as concur to the forming an Opera, I think it proper to begin firſt with the Muſick, in which ſome Judgment of the Recitative and Symphony is firſt to be made before we deſcend to the Singers themſelves, who are to be conſider'd in a twofold Senſe, as Muſicians, and Actors; the Inſtruments, and thoſe that touch them; the Decorations and Machines will likewiſe require a Place in this Examination.

(21) There is no weak Part in any of the *Italian* Opera's, where no Scene is preferable to the reſt for its peculiar Beauties; all the Songs are of an equal force, and

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(21) The *Italian* Compoſers take care to end every Scene with ſome particular Beauties, and when any conſiderable Actor is to go off, he concludes with ſome Air that is ſure to pleaſe: Beſides this, they end each Act with ſome full loud Song to leave an Impreſſion upon the Audience, and draw 'em into a Commendation of the Opera, as in *Camilla*, *Mai non ſe vede oncor*, which ends the firſt Act, and *che cede al furore*; which concludes the ſecond.

are

are ſure to be Crown'd with Applauſe; whereas in our Opera's, there are I know not how many languiſhing Scenes, and inſipid Airs, with which no body can be pleas'd, or diverted.

(22) It muſt be confeſs'd that our Recitative is much better than that of the *Italians*, which is too cloſe and ſimple; it's the ſame throughout, and can't properly be call'd Singing. Their Recitative is little better than downright ſpeaking, without any Inflexion, or Modulation of the Voice; and yet there is this to be admired in it, the Parts that accompany this

(22) The *Italian* Recitative is a Piece of Compoſition hardly ever to be comprehended by Strangers, and yet they that underſtand it reckon it the greateſt Beauty in Muſick, and I believe they are right, conſidering how much Art and Knowledge is neceſſary for the Compoſing, Playing, and Singing it. This Compoſition admits of the boldeſt Flights. Were it not for the Recitative, the great number of Airs hudled together wou'd ſoon cloy the Audience, and the Beauty of one wou'd be loſt in that of the other immediately following. 'Tis a Fault inſufferable in the *French* Opera's, that there is ſo little difference between their Recitative (if it may be call'd by that Name) and their Aria's, which can hardly be diſtinguiſh'd one from the other. Signor *Nicolino* is moſt remarkable for the Recitative; next to him is Signor *Valentini*, and thoſe that endeavour to imitate 'em are to be commended, though they can't arrive at their Perfection.

Pſalmody are incomparable, for they have ſuch an extraordinary Genius for Compoſition, that they know how to adapt charming Concords, even to a Voice that do's little more than Speak; a thing to be met with in no other Part of the World whatſoever.

(23) What has been ſaid of their Muſick in general, with regard to ours, will be of equal force, if we conſider their Symphony in particular. The Symphony in our Opera's is frequently poor and tireſome, whereas in *Italy* it's equally full and harmonious.

(24) I obſerv'd in the beginning of this Parallel how much we had the Advantage over

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(23) *Bononcini*'s Inſtrumental Muſick, that accompanies the Voice, is as much Superior to *Scarlatti*'s, as *Scarlatti*'s Vocal Muſick is Superior to *Bononcini*'s, ſo that they are both Excellent in their Way, and may be look'd on as the greateſt Maſters in the World in their different Characters.

(24) *Italy* do's not want thoſe Baſes, particularly at *Rome*, where great Numbers come to be preferr'd in the Pope's Chappel, in which the Pitch being almoſt two Notes lower than at *Venice*, they that Sing the Counter-tenor elſewhere, perform the upper Part in the Chappel, and conſequently the Tenor becomes the Counter-tenor, and the Barytone, the Tenor; ſo that the Baſe it ſelf muſt of neceſſity be very deep to reach and expreſs thoſe low

over the *Italians* in our Baſes, ſo common with us, and ſo rare to be found in *Italy*; but how ſmall is this in compariſon to the Benefit their Opera's receive from their *Caſtrati*, who abound without Number among them, whereas there is not one to be found in all *France*. Our Womens Voices are indeed as ſoft and agreeable as are thoſe of their *Caſtrati*, but then they are far from being either ſo ſtrong, or lively. No Man or Woman in the World can boaſt of a Voice like Theirs, they are clear, they are moving, and affect the Soul it ſelf.

Sometimes you hear a Symphony ſo charming, that you think nothing in Muſick can exceed it, 'till on a ſudden you perceive it was deſign'd only to accompany a more charming Air, Sung by one of theſe *Caſtrati*, who with a Voice the moſt clear, and at the ſame time equally ſoft, pierces the Symphony, and tops all the Inſtruments with an agreeableneſs

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low Notes. Theſe Baſes are peculiar to the Churches, being very improper for the Theatre, where inſtead of becoming the Part of an Hero, they wou'd ſet the Audience a Laughing. Whenever they are uſed, 'tis in the Mouth of a Magician, a Gyant, or a Devil, ſuch as *Pluto*, *Charon*, *Belzebub*, &c.

which they that hear it may conceive, but will never be able to deſcribe.

Theſe Pipes of Theirs, reſemble that of the *Nightingale*; Their long-winded Throats draw you in a manner out of your Depth, and make you loſe your Breath: They'll execute Paſſages of I know not how many Bars together, they'll have Eccho's on the ſame Paſſages, and *Swellings* of a prodigious Length, and then with a chuckle in the Throat exactly like that of a *Nightingale*, they'll conclude with Cadences of an equal Length, and all this in the ſame Breath.

Add to this, that theſe ſoft, theſe charming Voices acquire new Charms, by being in the Mouth of a Lover; what can be more affecting than the Expreſſions of their Sufferings in ſuch tender paſſionate Notes; in this the *Italian* Lovers have a very great Advantage over ours, whoſe hoarſe Maſculine Voices ill agree with the fine ſoft things they are to ſay to their Miſtreſſes. Beſides, the *Italian* Voices being equally ſtrong as they are ſoft, we hear all they Sing very diſtinctly, whereas half of it is loſt upon our Theatre unleſs we ſit cloſe to the Stage, or have the Spirit of Divination. Our Upper Parts are uſually Perform'd by Girls, that have neither Lungs nor Wind; whereas the ſame Parts in

Italy

Italy are always Perform'd by Men, whoſe firm piercing Voices are to be heard clearly in the largeſt Theatres whithout loſing a Syllable, ſit where you will.

But the greateſt Advantage the *Italians* receive from theſe *Caſtrati*, is, that their Voices hold good for thirty or forty Years together; (25) whereas our Women be-

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(25) I can't agree that Womens Voices are more ſubject to change than thoſe of the *Caſtrati*; 'tis true, that ſome of theirs will laſt 'till they are ſixty or ſeventy Years old, as *Gioſeppe Fede*'s at *Rome*, and that a Woman may loſe hers by that time ſhe comes to forty or fifty, but as it's certain that there are few Inſtances to be given of ſuch *Caſtrati* as have preſerv'd their Voices ſo long, ſo are there ſome Women that have held theirs longer; for which Reaſon I believe the Advantage in this reſpect is equal on both ſides. I think it not improper to obſerve in this Place, what it is that conduces moſt to the ſpoiling of a good Voice, and to adviſe ſuch as are deſirous to preſerve theirs to abſtain from all ſorts of diſorderly living that may prejudice their Health, but above all, they ought to avoid Incontinency, there being nothing that ſpoils the Organs of the Voice more than the frequent acts of Love; this eſpecially is more prejudicial to the Women, it not only ſubjecting 'em to the hazards that are equally incident to both Sexes, but expoſes 'em to the Fateigues of Childbearing, than which nothing can be more pernicious to a good Voice.

gin to loſe the Beauty of Theirs at ten or twelve Years end: ſo that an Actreſs is hardly form'd for the Stage before ſhe loſes her Voice, and another muſt be taken to ſupply her place, who being a Stranger to the Theatre, will at leaſt be out in the Action if ſhe comes off tolerably well in the Singing, and won't be fit to Perform any conſiderable Parts under five or ſix Years Practice. We think it a mighty matter in *France*, if we can brag of five or ſix good Voices among thirty or forty Actors and Actreſſes that are employ'd in the Opera. In *Italy* they are almoſt all of equal Merit, they ſeldom make uſe of indifferent Voices where there is ſo great a Variety of good ones.

As for the Actors, they muſt be conſider'd, either as Muſicians that have a Part to Sing, or Players that are to Act on the Theatre; in both theſe Capacities, the *French* are infinitely out-done by the *Italians*.

(26) In all our Opera's, we have either ſome inſignificant Actor that Sings out of Tune,

(26) I can't but obſerve in this Place, that the Town bear well enough with an indifferent Actor, tho' there is a choice of better to be had out of the Country, and they allow 'em time ſufficient to improve themſelves on the Stage. Whereas in the Opera which has been but lately eſtabliſh'd among

Tune, or Time, or ſome ignorant Actreſs that Sings falſe, and is excus'd, either becauſe ſhe is not as yet thoroughly acquainted with the Stage; or elſe ſhe has no Voice, and then ſhe is Born with, becauſe ſhe has ſome other way of pleaſing the Town, and withal makes a handſome Figure. This never happens in *Italy*, where there is not a Voice, but what may very well be liked; they have neither Man or Woman but what perform their Parts ſo perfectly well, that they are ſure to Charm an Audience by their agreeable manner of Singing tho' their Voices are not extraordinary; for Muſick is no where ſo well underſtood as in *Italy*; at which we are not to wonder, when we conſider, that the *Italians* learn Muſick as we do to Read; they have Schools among 'em where their Children are taught to Sing as ſoon as ours learn their *A. B. C.* they are ſent thither

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among us, and which conſiſting for the moſt part of Strangers, hard to be got, the Audience are apt to diſencourage the middling Performers that ſtand moſt in need of their Indulgence; which makes me believe, that if the Town doth not grow better natur'd, it will be impoſſible for the Opera to ſubſiſt long among us; for in caſe *Nicolino* ſhou'd miſcarry, either through Sickneſs or ſome other Accident, I know no one the Audience will ſuffer to perform his Part, and then farewell to the Opera.

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whilſt they are very Young, and continue there for nine or ten Years, ſo that by that time our Children are able to Read true, and without any Heſitation, Theirs have been taught to Sing with the ſame Judgment and Facility: To Sing at Sight, with them, is no more than to Read ſo with us. The *Italians* Study Muſick once for all, and attain it to the greateſt Perfection; the *French* learn it by halves, and ſo making themſelves never Maſters of it, they are bound always to be Scholars. When any New Piece is to be Preſented in *France*, our Singers are forc'd to Con it over and over before they can make themſelves Perfect: How many times muſt we Practice an Opera before it's fit to be Perform'd; this Man begins too ſoon, that too ſlow; one Sings out of Tune, another out of Time; (27) in the mean while the

(27) Some Years ſince the Maſter of the Muſick in the Opera at *Paris*, had an Elboe-Chair and Desk plac'd on the Stage, where, with the Score in one Hand, and a Stick in the other, he beat Time on a Table put there for that purpoſe, ſo loud, that he made a greater Noiſe than the whole Band, on purpoſe to be heard by the Performer. By degrees they remov'd this Abuſe from the Stage to the Muſick Room, where the Compoſer beats the Time in the ſame manner, and as loud as ever. The ſame was obſerv'd in *London* ſix or ſeven Years ago;

the Compoſer labours with Hand and Voice, and Screws his Body into a thouſand Contorſions, and finds all little enough to his Purpoſe. Whereas the *Italians* are ſo Perfect, and if I may uſe the Expreſſion, ſo Infallible, that with them a whole Opera is Perform'd with the greateſt Exactneſs, without ſo much as beating Time, or knowing who has the Direction of the Muſick. To this Exactneſs, they join all the Embelliſhments an Air is capable of; they run an hundred ſort of Diviſions in it; they in a manner Play with it, and teach their Throats to Echo in a Raviſhing manner, (28) whereas we hardly know what an Echo in Muſick means.

In

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ago; but ſince the *Italian* Maſters are come among us, and the Opera's have been introduced, they have put a ſtop to that ridiculous Cuſtom, which was Founded more upon an ill Habit than any Neceſſity there was for it, as doing more harm than good; for the Opera's are better Perform'd now without it than any Piece of Muſick was formerly; becauſe the Eye was too much Diſtracted, being obliged to mind the beating of the Meaſure, and the Score at the ſame time; beſides, it kept the Singer and the Player in too much Subjection, and fear of Errors, by which means they were depriv'd of that Liberty ſo abſolutely neceſſary to Muſick, and which gives a Strength and Spirit to the Notes.

(28) The *Italians* don't make uſe of the Term *Echo* to expreſs what the Author ſeems to mean in this Place,

In their tender Airs they ſoften the Voice inſenſibly, and at laſt let it dye outright: Theſe are Beauties of the greateſt Nicety; a Nicety, not only unknown to, but impracticable by the *French*, whoſe upper Parts are ſo weak, that when they come to ſoften 'em, they are quite ſmother'd, and you hear no more of 'em. However, theſe Echo's, theſe Abatements of the Voice add ſuch a Grace to the *Italian* Airs, that very often the Compoſer himſelf finds 'em more charming in the Mouth of the Singer, than they were at firſt in his own Imagination: And in this the *Italian* Opera's have a double Advantage over the *French*; ſince that which makes 'em better Singers makes 'em alſo better Actors: For playing, as it were with the Muſick, and ſinging exactly true, without obliging themſelves to attend either the Perſon that beats the Time, or any thing elſe, they have full leiſure to ad-

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Place, and when he ſaith the *French* don't underſtand what the Word *Echo* means in Muſick, he might have added, that the *Italians* themſelves are unacquainted with it, for I am inform'd by ſome Maſters of that Country, that their Diſtinctions are * *loud*, and *ſoft*, or elſe a *Swelling* of the Voice, call'd by them *Meſſe di Voce*. But I believe he expreſt himſelf in this manner to his Countrymen, as thinking they wou'd ſooner gueſs what he meant by *Echo* than *Meſſe di Voce*.

* *Forte*, e *piano*.

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juſt themſelves to the Action; and having nothing elſe to do but to expreſs the Paſſions, and compoſe their Carriage, they muſt certainly act much better than the *French*, who being not ſuch thoro' Maſters of the Muſick, are wholy buſied in the Performance. (29) We have not one Man in all our Opera's fit to act a Lover, except *Dumeny*; but beſides that he ſings very falſe, and has little or no Skill in Muſick, his Voice is not comparable to that of the *Caſtrati*. If a principal Actreſs, (30) ſuch as *la Rochoix*, to

(29) It is no wonder, if a ſupply for the Opera is ſo much eaſier to be found upon Occaſion in *Italy*, than in *France* or *England*, ſince there is but one Opera-Houſe at *Paris* for all *France*, and but one at *London* for all *England*; whereas there are no leſs than three in *Rome*, beſides private Conſorts; four or five at *Venice*; one at *Naples*; one at *Bologna*; one at *Milan*: Beſides which *Leghorn*, *Pratolino*, *Parma*, *Placentia*, *Modena*, *Fano*, *Todi*, *Genoa*, *Turin*, and ſeveral other Places have each one, where two or three new Opera's are perform'd every Year: From whence it's neceſſary, that *Italy* muſt abound with an infinite number of Singers, Compoſers, Performers, Poets, and Painters, to ſupply ſo many Theatres; and yet they often find it difficult to form a good Company: So that we are not to be ſurpriz'd if we perceive it hard to raiſe a good one in *London*, which as it is not contemptible, ſo will it in time grow much better if encouraged.

(30) I ſaw that Woman at *Paris*; ſhe was a good Figure enough, and had a tolerable Voice; but

ſhould ſtep a-ſide all *France* can't afford another able to ſupply her Place: Whereas in *Italy* when one Actor or Actreſs is out of the Way, they have ten as good ready to ſucceed 'em; for all the *Italians* are born (31) Comedians, and are as good Actors, as they are Muſicians: Their old Women are incomparable Figures, and their Buffoons excell the beſt of the ſort we ever ſaw on our Stage.

The *Italians* have this farther Advantage over us, which is, that their *Caſtrati* can act what Part they pleaſe, either a Man or a (32) Woman, as the Caſt of the

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but then ſhe was a wretched Actreſs, and ſung inſufferably out of Tune.

(31) The Buffoon Parts are admirably well done in *Italy*. The firſt remarkable Actor this way was the late *Pietro Paolo* of *Parma*; but he has been infinitely out-done by *Cavana*, the moſt excellent in his Way this Age has produced. Signor *Giulietto*, and Signora *Pollachina*, act the Servants Parts mighty well; and *Fedriera* makes an excellent old Woman; but theſe come far ſhort of Signora *Marchaſina*, who at preſent Acts the Chamber-Maid, and old Woman with *Cavana*.

(32) We muſt obſerve here, that no Women are ſuffer'd to ſing on the Theatres at *Rome* or *Duſſeldorp*; nor were they allow'd at *Vienna* in the late Emperor's Time; ſo that all the Womens Parts are perform'd in thoſe Places by the *Caſtrati*; among the chief of whom may be reckon'd Signor *Nicolini*,

the Piece requires; for they are ſo us'd to perform Womens Parts, that no Actreſs in the World can do it better than they. Their Voice is as ſoft as a Woman's, and withall its much ſtronger; they are of a larger ſize than Women, generally ſpeaking, and appear conſequently more Majeſtick: Nay, they uſually look handſomer on the Stage, than Women themſelves. *Ferini*, for Example, who perform'd the Part of *Sybaris*, in the Opera of (33) *Themiſtocles* at *Rome*, in the

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Nicolini, as I obſerv'd before; *Maurini*, who made ſo fine a Figure in the Opera of *Roderigo* on the Theatre *alla Pace* at *Rome*, and *Marc Antonio* of *Florence*, who perform'd the Part of *Aggripina* in the *Nerone infante*, with ſome others, not worth mentioning in this Place.

(33) The Author mentions this Opera of *Themiſtocles*, where he ſaith *Ferini* perform'd the part of *Sibaris*: Now upon Enquiry I'm inform'd for certain, that *Ferini* never perform'd on any Theatre in *Rome*, but that of *Tordinona*; and that the Opera of *Themiſtocles* was never repreſented on that Theatre; ſo that I believe the Author has either miſtaken or forgot the Name of the Opera. It will not be improper to obſerve in this Place that the Theatre of *Tordinona* conſiſted of ſeven Orders or Galleries one over another, and each Order was divided into 35 Boxes, which eaſily contain'd 12 Perſons each. The Stage was 184 Geometrical Feet long. This Theatre was ſilenced by *Innocent* XII. upon ſome Irregularities that had been committed in it.

Year

Year 1685, is taller and more beautiful than Women commonly are: He had I know not what Air of Grandure, and Modeſty in his Countenance; dreſt, as he was, like a *Perſian* Princeſs, with his Plume and Turban, he look'd like a real Queen, or Empreſs; and probably no Woman in the World ever made a more beautiful Figure than he did in that Habit. *Italy* abounds with theſe People; you'll find a great Choice of Actors and Actreſſes in every Town you come at. (34) I ſaw a Man at *Rome* who underſtood Muſick as well as the beſt of our Performers, and at the ſame time he was as good an Actor as our *Harlequin* or *Raiſin*, and yet, by Profeſſion, he was neither Singer nor Comedian: He was a Sollicitor, and quitted his Employment in the Carnival-Time to perform a Part in the Opera; when that was done he return'd again to his Buſineſs. It's therefore much eaſier, as we have made it appear, to perform an Opera in *Italy* than in *France*.

The *Italians* have, beſides all this, the ſame Advantage over us in reſpect of the Inſtruments, and the Performers, as they

(34) The Lawyer, here mention'd, is call'd *Paciani*, a Man well known at *Rome*: His Performances on the Theatre are purely for his Pleaſure.

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have in regard of the Singers, and their Voices. Their Violins are mounted with Strings much larger than ours; their Bows are longer, and they can make their Inſtruments ſound as loud again as we do ours. The firſt time I heard our Band in the Opera, after my Return out of *Italy*, my Ears had been ſo uſed to the Loudneſs of the *Italian* Violins, that I thought ours had all been bridled. Their Arch-Lutes are as large again as our Theorbo's, and their Sound conſequently louder by half; their Baſe-Viols are as large again as the *French*, and all ours put together don't ſound ſo loud in our Opera's, as two or three of thoſe Baſes do in *Italy*: This is certainly an Inſtrument much wanted in *France*; 'tis the Baſis on which the *Italians* in a manner build the whole Conſort; 'tis a ſure Foundation equally firm, as it is deep and low; it has a full mellow Sound, filling the Air with an agreeable Harmony, in a Sphere of Activity, extending it ſelf to the utmoſt Bounds of the moſt capacious Places: The Sound of their Symphonies is wafted by the Air to the Roof in their Churches, and even to the Skies in open Places: And for thoſe that play on theſe Inſtruments, we have very few can come near 'em here in *France*. I have ſeen Children in *Italy* not above

fourteen or fifteen Years old play the Baſe or Treble admirably well in Symphonies they never ſaw before, and in ſuch Symphonies as would puzzle the beſt of our Maſters; and this they do often over the Shoulders of 2 or 3 others that ſtand between them and the Score: 'Tis wonderful to ſee theſe Striplings with a ſide Look take off the moſt difficult Pieces at firſt Sight. They beat no time to the Bands in *Italy*, and yet you never find 'em out in the Meaſure or the Tune. You muſt rummage all *Paris* to fit out a good Band, 'tis impoſſible to find two ſuch as that in the Opera: At *Rome*, which is not a tenth Part ſo populous as *Paris*, there are Hands enow to compoſe ſeven or eight Bands, conſiſting of Harpſichords, Violins, and Theorbo's, equally good and perfect: But that which makes the *Italian* Bands infinitely preferable to thoſe in *France*, is, that the greateſt Maſters are not above performing in 'em. I have (35) ſeen *Corelli*, *Paſquini*, and *Gaetani*, play all toge-

(35) It won't be improper in this Place to give the Reader a Liſt of the moſt remarkable Performers in *Italy*, together with the Singers, as we have done before of the Compoſers. After which ſome mention ſhall be made of our Band here in *London*: And firſt for the Performers.

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together in the ſame Opera at *Rome*; and they are allow'd to be the greateſt Maſters in the World on the Violin, the Harpſichord, and Theorbo, or Arch-Lute; and as

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The moſt famous Maſters for the Harpſichord are *Bernardo Paſquini*, and his Scholar *Bernardo Gaffi*, and *Scarlatti* at *Rome*; at *Venice*, *Pollaroli*, with ſeveral others, among whom is *Scarlatti*'s Son, call'd *Scarlattino*, the Prodigy of the Age. For the Violins at *Rome* are *Archangello Corelli*, his Scholar *Matteo*, and *Antonio Montonari*, with ſome others. At *Florence*, *Martino Bitti*; at *Venice* *Giorgetto* and *Albinoni*; at *Naples* *Giovan Carlo Caito*, and *Petrillo*, together with *Giovan-Antonio Guidi*, a *Genoeſe*, at preſent in *France*; and the famous *Carlo Ambrogio Lanati* at *Milan*, called *il Gobbo-della Regina*, who was here in *England* with *Siface*, in the Reign of King *James* II.

For the Violoncelli, *Bononcini* is indiſputably the firſt; *Fiore* at *Turin*, *Gioſeppe Jachini* at *Bologna*, and at *Rome* *Pippo Amadie* are deſervedly to be admired.

For the Theorbo, the firſt of all was the late *Tedeſchino* of *Florence*; but *Contini*, who was two Years ſince here in *London*, has out-ſtripp'd him.

For the Lute was the famous *Gaetano* at *Rome*; he dy'd young, but had no Rival in his Profeſſion. At preſent the moſt remarkable are *Petruccio* and *Dominico Sarao* at *Naples*, with ſome others: But the greateſt Prodigy in Nature, and the moſt ſurprizing Performer that ever was in the World was *Galletti*, who perform'd on the Cornet. Among the Singers the moſt famous was *Siface*, re-

as ſuch they are generally paid 3 or 4co Piſtoles a Piece, for a Month, or ſix Weeks at the moſt. This is the common Pay in *Italy*, and this Encouragement is one Reaſon why they have more Maſters there than we have with us. We deſpiſe 'em in

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markable for his fine Voice and Manner; he was kill'd about ten Years ſince between *Bologna* and *Ferrara*. *Piſtochini* was the firſt that ſung with a *Guſto*, and peculiar Manner in which he excell'd, and *Luigino* his Scholar, who dyed about two Years ago. *Cortona* was famous for Acting the Lovers Part, and *Ballarino* for that of a Tyrant. *Buzzoleni* was admirable for the Tenor Voice and his Manner; but all theſe are at preſent ſuper-annuated, ſo that we have none but Signor *Nicolino*, who is an Abſtract of them all, being an excellent and general Actor.

For Women, *Margheritina* of *Saxony* ought firſt to be mentioned, though ſhe is at preſent out-rival'd by *Bombace*, *Mignatta*, and *Barbarucciu*, who have now left the Stage, and their Places are ſupply'd by the celebrated *Diamantina*, *Santina Tilla*, *Checca*, and ſome others.

The fineſt Treble-Voices at preſent in *Italy*, are *Pauoluccio*'s famous Nephew in the Pope's Chapel at *Rome*, the *Savoyard* at *Turin*, who has left off ſinging, and the celebrated *Matteuccio* at *Rome*.

According to my Promiſe, I muſt here make a brief mention of ſome of the beſt Hands in the Band of our Opera, being at preſent inferior to few in *Italy*, and ſome Hands would make it one of

in *France*, as People of a mean Profeſſion: (36) In *Italy* they are eſteem'd as Men of Note and Diſtinction. There they raiſe very conſiderable Fortunes, whereas with us they get but a bare Livelyhood: From hence

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(36) The Eſteem Muſick meets with in *Italy* and *Germany* is extraordinary, as may be ſeen in thoſe who have been advanced by their Princes; of which ſome ſhort Inſtances ſhall be given.

The Abbot *Stephani*, a very famous Compoſer of the Duetto's, arriv'd to be a Secretary of State to the Elector *Palatine*, and is at preſent preferr'd to a rich Biſhoprick in *Germany*, being equally skill'd in Muſick, and the *Belles Lettres*. *Cecchino de Maſſimi*, belonging to the Grand Prince of *Tuſcany*, did for many Years manage all the Affairs of that Houſe with great Prudence and Reputation.

Signor *Nicolino di Napoli*, who is at preſent in the Opera here, was preferr'd to the Dignity of *Cavaliero di St. Marco* by the late Doge of *Venice*, not ſo much for his Singing as his Perſonal Merit.

as ſuch they are generally paid 3 or 400 Piſtoles a Piece, for a Month, or ſix Weeks at the moſt. This is the common Pay in *Italy*, and this Encouragement is one Reaſon why they have more Maſters there than we have with us. We deſpiſe 'em in

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markable for his fine Voice and Manner; he was kill'd about ten Years ſince between *Bologna* and *Ferrara*. *Piſtochini* was the firſt that ſung with a *Guſto*, and peculiar Manner in which he excell'd, and *Luigino* his Scholar, who dyed about two Years ago. *Cortona* was famous for Acting the Lovers Part, and *Ballarino* for that of a Tyrant. *Buzzoleni* was admirable for the Tenor Voice and his Manner; but all theſe are at preſent ſuper-annuated, ſo that we have none but Signor *Nicolino*, who is an Abſtract of them all, being an excellent and general Actor.

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hence it is, that ten times more People apply themſelves to Muſick in *Italy* than *France*. Nothing is more common in *Italy* than Performers, Singers, and Muſick. The Singers in the *Navone* Square at *Rome*, and thoſe on the *Rialto* at *Venice*, which hold the ſame Rank there as our Ballad-Singers on *Pontneuf* do with us, will often join three or four in a Company, and one taking the Violin, another

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Matteuccio of *Naples* was chief Favourite to *Charles* II. late King of *Spain*, inſomuch that all Favours paſs'd through his Hands.

Conte Calvi was created a Count by the late Duke of *Parma*, and had a great Eſtate with his Title; and was Chief Miniſter to that Prince.

Signora *Giorgina*, after having been Favourite to Queen *Chriſtina* of *Sweden*, was firſt Lady of Honour to * the Vice-Queen of *Naples*; and at preſent enjoys the Title of Marchioneſs in *Spain*.

Medina Celi.

Melani, a Compoſer at *Rome*, was Reſident to one of the *German* Electors.

Margaritina Sannicola was a great Favourite of the late Elector of *Saxony*, and made a principal Figure in that Court.

Giulia Maſotti was much in Favour with the late Emperor *Leopold*.

Ballarino is in a great Degree of Favor with the preſent Emperor, who has likewiſe a juſt Eſteem for *Bononcini*; they both receive very great Salaries. There are ſeveral others might be inſtanc'd, who beſides their great Skill in Muſick are well ſeen in the other Sciences,

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the Baſe, and a third a Theorbo, or Guittarre; with theſe Inſtruments they'll accompany their Voices ſo juſtly, that we ſeldom meet with much better Muſick in our *French* Conſorts.

To conclude all, the *Italian* Decorations and Machines are much better than ours; their Boxes are more magnificent; the Opening of the Stage higher, and more capacious; our Painting, compar'd to theirs, is no better than Dawbing; you'll find among their Decorations Statues of Marble and Alabaſter, that may vye with the moſt celebrated Antiques in *Rome*; Palaces, Colonades, Galleries, and Sketches of Architecture, ſuperior in Grandure and Magnificence to all the Buildings in the World; Pieces of Perſpective that deceive the Judgment, as well as the Eye, even of thoſe that are curious in the Art; Proſpects of a prodigious Extent, in Spaces not thirty Foot deep; nay, they often repreſent on the Stage the lofty Edifices of the ancient *Romans*, of which only the Remains are now to be ſeen; ſuch as the (37) *Coloſſus* which

(37) The *Coloſſus* the Author mentions was painted by Father *Pozzi* the Jeſuit, who, as well for his Painting in the Church of St. *Ignatius* be-

which I ſaw in the *Roman* College in the Year 1698, in the ſame Perfection in which it ſtood in the Reign of *Veſpaſian* its Founder; ſo that theſe Decorations are not only entertaining but inſtructive.

As for their Machines, I can't think it in the Power of Human Wit to carry the Invention farther. In the Year 1697 I ſaw an Opera at *Turin*, wherein (38) *Orpheus* was to charm the wild Beaſts by the Power of his Voice: Of theſe there were all ſorts introduced on the Stage; nothing cou'd be more natural, or better deſign'd; an Ape among the reſt play'd an hundred Pranks, the moſt diverting in the World, leaping on the Backs of the other Animals,

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longing to his Order, and other Pieces but eſpecially for his two Books of Perſpective, in *Folio*, printed at *Rome*, is worthily eſteem'd as the firſt Man in that kind, by all thoſe that have any Skill in that Science.

(38) This Opera of *Orpheus* was afterwards perform'd at *Rome*, but not taking, the Undertakers were obliged to have recourſe to the Opera of *Roderigo*, which they had preſented juſt before. This Opera of *Roderigo* was compoſed by *Franciſco Gaſperini*, and was univerſally applauded. Both theſe were perform'd on the Theatre *della Pace*, and the principal Parts were done by *Biſcionie*, *Maurino*, and *Valentino*, who is at preſent here in *London*.

ſcratch-

ſcratching their Heads, and entertaining the Spectators with the reſt of his Monkey Tricks. I ſaw once at *Venice* an Elephant diſcover'd on the Stage, when, in an inſtant, that great Machine diſappear'd, and an Army was ſeen in its Place; the Soldiers having, by the Diſpoſition of their Shields, given ſo true a Repreſentation of it, as if it had been a real living Elephant.

The Ghoſt of a Woman, ſurrounded with Guards, was introduced on the Theatre of *Capranica* at *Rome*, in the Year 1698; this Phantom extending her Arms, and unfolding her Cloaths, was, with one Motion, transform'd into a perfect Palace, with its Front, its Wings, its Body, and Court-Yard, all form'd by magical Architecture; the Guards ſtriking their Halberds on the Stage, were immediately turn'd into ſo many Water-Works, Caſcades, and Trees, that form'd a charming Garden before the Palace. Nothing can be more quick than were thoſe Changes, nothing more ingenious or ſurprizing: And, in Truth, the greateſt Wits in *Italy* frequently amuſe themſelves with Inventions of this Nature: People of the firſt Quality entertain the Publick with ſuch Spectacles as theſe, without any Proſpect of Gain

Gain to themſelves. (39) Signor *Cavaliero Acciaioli*, Brother to the Cardinal of that Name, had the Direction of thoſe on the Theatre *Capranica* in the Year 1698. This

(39) Beſides the Machines mention'd by the Author in this Place, we ſaw ſeveral others at *Rome* of the ſame *Cavaliero Acciaioli*'s Contrivance, as *la Freſcatane* on the Theatre of *Torre di Nona*, the *Colonnato* of *Lapis Lazzuli*, the Funeral in *Penelope*, and many more equally ſurprizing. Upon the Theatre of *Capranica* the ſame Artiſt contriv'd *Il Gigante*, &c. But the moſt famous of all on that Theatre was the Intermede of Hell, in the Opera of *Nerone Infante*, which I will endeavour to deſcribe with as much Brevity as I'm able, it being impoſſible to expreſs it in ſuch Words as I deſerves. At the Sound of a horrid Symphony, conſiſting of *Corni, Serpentoni, & Regali*, part of the Floor of the Stage open'd and diſcover'd a Scene underneath, repreſenting ſeveral Caves full of infernal Spirits, that flew about in a prodigious Number, diſcharging Fire and Smoak at their Noſtrils, and their Mouths: At ſome diſtance likewiſe was obſerv'd a great Number of damned Spirits, labouring under their ſeveral Torments; and in another ſide was diſcover'd the River of *Lethe* with *Charon*'s Boat, on Board of which was *Mercury*, *Cupid*, and the Soul of one who lately dy'd for Love. Upon their Landing a prodigious Monſter appear'd, whoſe Mouth opening, to the great Horror of the Spectators cover'd the Front Wings, and the remaining part of the Stage: Within his Jaws were diſco-

This is the Sum of what can be offer'd in behalf of the *French* or *Italian* Muſick by way of Parallel. I have but one thing more to add in Favour of the Opera's in *Italy*,

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diſcover'd a Throne compos'd of Fire, and a Multitude of monſtrous Serpents, on which *Pluto* ſate, with a Crown of Fire on his Head, and habited in other Royal Ornaments of the ſame Nature. The Singer that perform'd this Part was one of thoſe deep Baſes, which in the Author's Opinion are ſo rarely found in *Italy*. After *Cupid* had demanded Juſtice of *Pluto* upon thoſe old Women, who, in the preceding Intermede, had cut his Wings for making *Agrippina*, *Nero*'s Mother, in Love and ſeveral other Paſſages belonging to this Intermede, the Mouth of the Monſter cloſed, at which Inſtant *Cupid* endeavouring to fly off was arreſted by a little Devil, who ſeiz'd on his Foot; upon which *Cupid* giving himſelf a little Turn ſhot the Devil with one of his Darts; whereupon the Devil was transform'd into a curling Smoak that diſappear'd by Degrees, and *Cupid* eſcap'd. After this the great Monſter expanding its Wings began to move very ſlowly towards the Audience, under his Body appear'd great Multitudes of Devils, who form'd themſelves into a *Ballet*, and plung'd one after another into the Opening of the Floor before-mentioned; out of which a prodigious Quantity of Fire and Smoak was diſcharg'd.... After this, the great Monſter being got as far as the Muſick-Room, and whilſt all the Spectators were intent upon what was doing, and began to fear he would come into the

Italy, which will confirm all that has been already ſaid to their Advantage; which is, that, though they have neither Chorus's nor other Diverſions in uſe with us, their Entertainments laſt (40) five or ſix Hours together, and yet the Audience is never tired;

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the Pit, he was in an inſtant transform'd into an innumerable Mulutitude of broad white Butterflies, which flew all into the Pit, and ſo low that ſome of them touch'd the Hats of ſeveral of the Spectators; at which ſome ſeem'd diverted, and others were not a little terrified, 'till by Degrees they lodg'd themſelves on different Parts of the Theatre, and at length diſappear'd. During this Circumſtance, which ſufficiently employed the Eyes of the Spectators, the Stage was refitted, and the Scene changed into a beautiful Garden, with which the third Act begun. This Repreſentation was ſo extraordinary in its Nature, ſo exactly perform'd, and ſo univerſally admired and applauded, that great Numbers of Foreigners came to *Rome* on purpoſe to behold it, and confeſs'd when they had ſeen it, that it far exceeded the Expectations Fame had given 'em of it: And it muſt be confeſs'd it gave the Spectators a more perfect inſtructive Idea of Hell, than it's poſſible for the moſt artful flowing Fancy to delineate. So that the Author was not miſtaken when he ſaid, that theſe ſort of Entertainments are no leſs inſtructive than agreeable.

(40) The *Italian* Opera's don't uſually laſt 5 or 6 Hours, as this Author imagines, the longeſt being not above four: 'Tis true, that ſometimes at

Vienna

tired; whereas after one of our Repreſentations, which does not hold above half ſo long at moſt, there are very few Spectators, but what grow ſufficiently weary, and think they have had more than enough.

Vienna the late Emperor *Leopold* would have Opera's of the length the Author mentions, provided they were good, being a great Admirer of the *Italian* Muſick; beſides he compoſed himſelf, and plaid on the Harpſichord to Perfection.

A Critical DISCOURSE ON Opera's and Muſick IN *ENGLAND.*

THO' Muſick has in all Ages been highly eſteem'd, yet has it not been at all times in equal Perfection: The miraculous Accounts Antiquity has left us of it, meet with no Credit at preſent; yet is it a juſt Inſtance of the high Veneration the Ancients had for it: Add to this, that at preſent it deſerves to be number'd among thoſe Arts, that owe their Perfection to modern Improvements, and were in a manner unknown to the Ancients, ſuch as *Phyſick*, *Navigation*, *Geography*, &c.

The

The moſt beautiful Part of Muſick is Harmony, of which the Ancients had no manner of Knowledge, as may be made appear from all their Writings that treat of Muſick, making no uſe either of *Conſonance* or *Diſſonance* in their Compoſitions. This may be proved from ſeveral Inſtances; but I ſhall content my ſelf with the Authority of *Seneca* only, who in his eighty-fourth Epiſtle has theſe Words: *Non vides quam multorum vocibus Chorus contet? unus tamen ex omnibus ſonus redditur, aliqua illic acuta eſt, aliqua gravis, aliqua media, accedunt viris Feminæ, interponuntur tibiæ: ſingulorum illic latent Voces, omnium apparent, de Choro dico, quem veteres Philoſophi noverant*, &c.

They were likewiſe Strangers to all thoſe Inſtruments, which are at preſent in uſe among us, I mean thoſe that require the Left-Hand on the Finger-board, ſuch as the Violin, the Violoncelli, the Lute, the Baſe-Viol, *&c.* making uſe only of the Inſtruments that conſiſted of open Chords, as the Harp, the Harpſichord, and the Baſe of the Lute.

They had indeed another ſort of Inſtrument, which they call'd *Tibiæ*, ſomething like our Haut-bois; all the reſt among 'em were of little or no Conſequence: This is evident from the Medals and Statues that

are

remaining among us. All those Instruments were unable to express the Slur, or *Appoggiato* (as the *Italians* term it;) and from hence we may easily conjecture they were incapable of imitating the Voice.

Being Strangers to *Consonance* and *Dissonance*, they were consequently so to Harmony too, as has been observed before; and indeed in my Opinion, nothing cou'd be more disagreeable, than so many Voices and Instruments sounding all together the same Notes, by Eighths and Fifths, which cou'd have no tolerable Effect upon an Audience.

At present, every thing is render'd useful in a Composition, discording Notes as well as the Harmonious, and that with much Art and Address. To the best of their Instruments, the Moderns have added a great number of their own Invention, that Charm us in our Consorts; and by this means the Science is brought to as great a Perfection, as was Painting and Sculpture in the Days of *Raphael Urbin*, and *Michael Angelo*.

The *Italians* were the first Inventors of the Opera, which has been transmitted by them into *Germany*, and *France*; at present it begins to get footing in *England*; and the Improvement of it here, is the Occasion of this present Discourse.

Some

Some Years ago, they gave the Name of Opera to all those Plays here in *London* as had any Musical Dialogues intermix'd with the Scenes; for no other reason, in my Opinion, but because there were several Chorus's and Dances added, after the manner of the *French*

Some time after, one Mr. *Cl----n*, newly return'd out of *Italy*, Labour'd might and main to Compose an *English* Opera, call'd *Arsinoe*, which, according to my Judgment, as little deserv'd the Name of an Opera as the Pieces before mention'd; because in those we find several beautiful Strokes, compos'd by the late Famous Mr. *Henry Purcell*; whereas it will be as difficult to discover one tolerable thing in this, as *Diogenes* thought it was to meet with an honest Man, when he went seeking after him with his Candle and Lanthorn at Noon-Day. There is nothing in it but a few Sketches of antiquated *Italian* Airs, so mangled and sophisticated, that instead of *Arsinoe*, it ought to be called the Hospital of the old Decrepid *Italian* Opera's. *Arsinoe.*

However, such as it was, this met with Applause, it being the first of that kind which had ever been seen on the *English* Stage, and this encouraged the Author to Compose another worse than the first; of

which we ſhall have Occaſion to ſpeak in its proper Place.

G----rs *Paſtoral.*

The Theatre in the *Hay-Market* open'd with a Paſtoral Compos'd by *Gia*———*o Gr*———*r*, a *German*, who had Study'd Compoſition in *Italy*. This was the firſt Paſtoral that had ever been Preſented on the *Engliſh* Stage, and prov'd fatal to that Theatre, and ſo indeed have all the reſt, for none of 'em ever Took; ſo that the Undertakers of the Opera ought to tremble at the very Name of Paſtoral, as will more plainly appear from what follows.

Temple of Love.

This Paſtoral was ſucceeded by another, Compos'd by *Sa*———*ni*, a *Venetian*, and call'd the *Temple of Love*; which, either for that the Author cou'd do no better, or becauſe he had Entertain'd ſo mean an Opinion of the *Engliſh* Nation, as to think any thing well-deſign'd, and finiſh'd, was above their Taſte; whatever the Reaſon of it was, the Compoſition was ſo poor and trivial (indeed the Author and the Work ſeem to be both of a Piece) that probably it might have paſs'd Muſter in the *Indies*, or ſome other barbarous Countries where Muſick was hardly ever heard of, but 'twas impoſſible it ſhou'd take in *London*, where nothing but what is Excellent in its kind, is ſecure of Applauſe.

After

After this had been Perform'd once or twice, the Theatre in *Drury-Lane* Presented the Opera of *Camilla*, Compos'd by *Gio. Buononcini*, and prepared for the *Engliſh* Stage, by *Ni----o Ha---m*; this being a Royal Opera, the Muſick admirable, and Perform'd in a more regular Method than any of the former (tho' much of its Beauty was loſt in the *Engliſh* Language) it receiv'd ſo Univerſal an Applauſe, that I don't think it ever met with ſo good a Reception in any of its firſt Repreſentations Abroad. Camilla. *That is, the Perſons were of a Royal Character.*

Before this, ev'ry Man that had the leaſt ſmattering in Muſick undertook to Compoſe an Opera, but upon the appearance of *Camilla*, all their Projects vaniſh'd into nothing; they who before bragg'd of their Undertakings, were now aſham'd to own 'em, and they who had valu'd themſelves upon having almoſt finiſh'd their Work, begun now to deny they had ſo much as ſet about it; ſo that at leaſt ſix or ſeven Embryo's of Opera's, that had no Being but in the airy Conceptions of their pretended Compoſers, became Abortive, and every one join'd in the admiration of *Camilla*.

However, one of theſe Opera's ſtruggled through, and mounted the Stage, on purpoſe to frighten all *England* with its Roſamond.

abominable Muſick; and this was the celebrated *Roſamond*, with the Expectations of which the Town had been full for a Year together. The Author of *Arſinoe* Compos'd this Piece, which thoſe, who had any skill in Muſick, foretold before its appearance, was to be but of a ſhort continuance. The Event juſtified their Conjectures, for after the third Night it expired, and 'tis generally thought it wou'd not have liv'd ſo long, had not the good natur'd Phyſicians ſupported its Spirits with a little *Aurum Potabile*.

I obſerv'd before, the firſt was a filthy Fardle of old *Italian* Airs; but I can't ſay the ſame of this, for indeed I don't know what to make of it.

The Introduction begins in a very Extravagant manner, with ſuch Conſonances as were never heard before; and that he might oblige his Audience with ſome Novelty, as others begin their Sonata's in *Adagio*, and end in *Allegro*; this Author begins his in *Allegro*, and ends in *Adagio*, without Senſe, Reaſon, or Harmony. The reſt of the Opera is nothing but a continuation of the *Baſſi arpeggiati* (as the *Italians* term it) without any other deſign than to Promiſe much, and Perform nothing. Having begun ill in the very firſt Air, thinking (however that he had found a Mares-Neſt)

Neſt) he goes on in the ſame manner; and tho' nothing is ſaid to be more fertile than Error, this Author's Genius is ſo narrow, as not to be able to vary upon that. But indeed it wou'd be unreaſonable to expect any good in the Progreſs, after ſo pitiful a Beginning.

In ſhort, this Opera is no better than a confus'd *Chaos* of Muſick, where there is ev'ry thing, and nothing, and for my part I think the only thing to be lik'd in it, is that it's ſhort: and I believe, if a Reward was to be ordain'd for him that made the worſt Muſick in all the World, the Author of *Roſamond* wou'd have reaſon to ſay he had not loſt his Labour, ſince he wou'd have an undoubted Title to the Gratification.

Nothing quickens the Wit of Man more effectually than Neceſſity; it is a fertile Cauſe, and often produces prodigious Effects, and may well be called the Mother of Invention, ſince it has put a *Swiſs* Count (whoſe Earldom lies in the Land of the Moon) upon Cooking up an Opera. Thomyris.

Indeed it's ſomething extraordinary, that a Perſon, who knows not what Compoſition, Playing, or Singing, or any other thing belonging to the Profeſſion means, ſhou'd be taught by Neceſſity how to

make an Opera, I hope I ſhall oblige the World in imparting ſo beneficial a Secret to Mankind, which will turn to a more profitable and certain Account than the Study of Alchimy, or the Philoſopher's Stone. The Receipt is as follows.

Pick out about an hundred *Italian* Airs from ſeveral Authors, good, or bad, it ſignifies nothing. Among theſe, make uſe of fifty five, or fifty ſix, of ſuch as pleaſe your Fancy beſt, and Marſhall 'em in the manner you think moſt convenient. When this is done, you muſt employ a Poet to write ſome *Engliſh* Words, the Airs of which are to be adapted to the *Italian* Muſick. In the next place you muſt agree with ſome Compoſer to provide the Recitative, and promiſe to give him, in caſe the Opera is perform'd, as little as poſſible; by this means you'll run no Riſque, being at little or no Expence. When this is done, you muſt make a Bargain with ſome Mungril *Italian* Poet to Tranſlate that Part of the *Engliſh* that is to be Perform'd in *Italian*; and then deliver it into the Hands of ſome Amanuenſis, that underſtands Muſick better than your ſelf, to Tranſcribe the Score, and the Parts In the laſt place, conjole the Town into a luſty Subſcription, and let this Piece of Patch-work, which you call your Opera, tho'

tho' you know nothing of the matter, take, or not, you can't fail of putting four or five hundred Guinea's into your Pocket; for no leſs did the Count get by his doughty Opera of *Thomyris*.

If any one ſhou'd condemn this Proceeding of yours, you have nothing to do but to laugh at him, and tell him the Succeſs has juſtified your Undertaking, that they who had furniſh'd the Theatre with Opera's before you, and had been at exceſſive Care and Pains to give the Town a good Entertainment, did not get a third Part ſo much after all their Labour, as you have done by your Muſical Whimſey; and that if they have no other ſupport, they'll certainly die Beggars in the end, in ſpight of their great Knowledge and Application.

However, my Opinion of *Thomyris* is, that the Reaſon it did not Diſpleaſe, was owing to fifteen or ſixteen Airs that were really good in it; whereas, in all the reſt of the Opera's put together, except *Camilla*, there is not one tollerable Air to be found; this Conſideration, and the Neceſſity there was of giving *Camilla* ſome Relaxation, obliged the Lovers of Muſick to bear with it, and be contented for the preſent. Take thoſe Airs out, and you'll find the Remnant an inſipid Mi-

ſcellany; the Beauty that belongs to any one Part being loſt in the general Deformity of the whole.

The Count, in anſwer to what I have ſaid, may urge, that it was not his Fault there were no more good Airs in his Opera, and indeed I believe him; for cou'd the poor Man have diſtinguiſh'd a good Air from a bad one, cou'd he have known the Effect this or that ſort of Muſick muſt in all likelihood have on the Stage, when his Hand was in, he wou'd have made a better Choice; for I'm of Opinion he meant well, and had no other ill Deſign upon the Audience but to get ſome of their Mony.

Triumph of Love.

The Winter following, a Paſtoral call'd the *Triumph of Love* was Perform'd on the Theatre in the *Hay-Market*; and certainly if ſmall Villages are render'd Famous in Hiſtory by the loſs of ſome Battels Fought near 'em, the *Triumph of Love* will grow Notorious in *Gradu Muſicati*, for the Deſolation it brought upon that Theatre, which was ſo great that the then Undertaker was conſtrain'd to abandon Opera's, foreſeeing that a *Triumph of Love*, or two more, wou'd of Neceſſity undo him.

This Paſtoral was ſet to Muſick by the Order of Cardinal *Ottoboni* at *Rome*, on purpoſe

purpoſe to Uſher in an Entertainment he had prepared in his own Palace of ſome little Wooden Figures which were made to move with ſo much Art, that it was wonderfully ſurprizing to ſee a thing Inanimate perform all the Actions of a Living Creature. Several Springs managed by one under the Stage directed the Motion, which reſembled that of a Watch, and the whole may be compared to one of our Puppet-Shows, only the Contrivance was much more Artificial and Magnificent; for I have been told, that every one of thoſe little Figures coſt the Cardinal at leaſt an hundred Piſtoles. However he thought this alone wou'd appear too trivial an Entertainment, and therefore join'd the foregoing Paſtoral to it, which, that it might be ſet to Muſick as ſoon as poſſible, he put it into three Compoſers Hands, *viz. Carlo Ceſarini* Set the firſt Act, *Giovannino del' Violone* the ſecond, and *Franciſco Gaſparini* the third.

The chief Deſign of the Cardinal was to Regale ſuch Strangers as were then at *Rome* with a ſight of this New, and, as he thought, Prodigious Invention, contriv'd by *Comte* St. *Martino*, and *Cavaliero Acciaioli*, who had ſtudied the Mathematicks for their Diverſion. The whole Entertainment was very fine, but every one admired,

mired, in a particular manner, the Contrivance of the Figures.

This Muſick being ſome time after brought into *England*, it came into Signior *Val*-----*no*'s Head to put it on the Stage; without conſidering it was Originally Deſign'd to be Sung in a Room, with the Parts in the Singers Hands, and not to be Perform'd off hand on a Theatre; and ſince the Styles proper for the Chamber and the Stage are perfectly different, it was impoſſible it cou'd have any good Effect; beſides this, he left out almoſt all the Recitative, and added a great number of Noiſie Airs, that ſeemed to vye with each other which ſhou'd be loudeſt; to theſe he join'd Chorus's and Dances in abundance, after the *French* Faſhion; inſomuch that this Paſtoral was perfectly chang'd from its former Being, and that ſoft Milk which nouriſhes the happy Shepherds on the fertile *Arcadian* Plains, grew hard and ſower, and ſo curdled in the Stomachs of thoſe that Taſted it, that they were Surfeited with the firſt Meal, and dar'd not venture a ſecond time on ſuch diſagreeable unwholſom Food.

So that *Val*----*no*, notwithſtanding his high Conceit of his own Abilities, tho' he thought no one more proper for the direction of an Opera than himſelf, was baulk'd

baulk'd in his Expectations, and fell ſhort of his Deſign, which was to put all the other Opera's that had been Performed before out of Countenance; and this may ſerve for a Caution to ſuch as venture upon things above their reach. Perhaps he may alledge in his own Defence, that he had as much right as the Count, to preſs a Body of Airs to Man out an Opera, but I can't think the Allegation juſt; for whereas the Count has a very mean Opinion of himſelf, and knows himſelf very Ignorant in point of Muſick, (tho' his Succeſs ſeems an Argument of the contrary, and no one is obliged to expoſe his own Defects) and conſequently is ready to take the Advice of others, by omitting or changing what they ſhall judge proper; *Val----no* on the other Hand is ſo high in his own Imagination, as to think no one capable of directing him, but doing every thing out of his own Head, it's no wonder he has ſo groſly miſcarried, and that his frequent Miſtakes have made the World entertain a mean Opinion of his Judgment.

Pyrrhus *and* Demetrius.

The laſt Winter brought *Pyrrhus* and *Demetrius* on the Stage, which the Town had been made to expect long before. The Muſick is of the famous *Scarlatti*, and the Opera is judg'd the beſt that Author

thor ever Compos'd, having met with an Univerſal Applauſe at *Naples*, *Rome*, and where-ever elſe it has been Perform'd. But whereas ſome of the Airs are very difficult, and others indifferent in their kind, the Director of this, who is the ſame that had the Direction of *Camilla*, thought himſelf obliged, that he might the better hit the Taſte of the *Engliſh*, to inſert almoſt half the Airs of his own Compoſition; many of which indeed ſucceeded even better than ſome of *Scarlatti*'s that remain'd in the Opera. And this he did, not at random, like the Gentlemen before mention'd, who choſe their Airs blindfold, and apply'd 'em without any Management, or Deliberation; but having firſt conſider'd what Places of Neceſſity required new Airs, he Compos'd 'em himſelf, and endeavour'd with all imaginable Care and Application to follow as much as was poſſible the Deſign of an Author ſo conſiderable as *Scarlatti*; and it muſt be confeſs'd he has not ſucceeded amiſs.

When this firſt appear'd upon the Stage, which was ſhortly after the Death of his Royal Highneſs the Prince, the Audience ſeem'd not to like it ſo well as *Camilla*; probably becauſe the Muſick is more Melancholy, and better Study'd than the former; however time wrought 'em into

a better Opinion of it, and at preſent the whole Town declares in favour of the King of *Epire*.

This leads me to a more particular Examination of the Opera in Queſtion, and having inquired into its Beauties and Defects, I ſhall declare my Opinion of it, as I have done of the reſt, confeſſing in the firſt place, that I think the Publick very ſeldom out in their Judgment. The Recitative of this Opera ſeems much better than any of the former: I think ſome of the Airs exceeding Beautiful, and properly apply'd; but the firſt, which begins *Vieni o Sonno*, tho' the Muſick be Divine, yet the whole Air is too long, and I think the Repetition of the firſt Part might be omitted without breaking the Thread of the Muſick, as well as the next Air, *viz. Tortorella*, &c. which is exceeding heavy (tho' this Air may be changed) together with a great part of the Recitative that follows, which tho' it be neceſſary in the Place, and good in its Kind, yet it cloys the Audience too much, coming ſo ſoon after the Airs before-mention'd. The ſecond Act is the moſt Beautiful in the whole Opera, tho' it begins and ends amiſs. The Air *per le Campagne*, &c. in the Beginning, as it has no Buſineſs in the Opera, ſo is it much too long, and being not reliſh'd by the

the Audience, it may much better be ſpared. This Act concludes with the Air *Veder parmi un ombra nera*, which is indeed a piece of Muſick labour'd to the laſt Perfection, and than which nothing can be better or more maſterly; yet being at the end of an Act, it's too Serious and Melancholy for that Place; ſo that we are not to wonder, if the Air beginning with *la Fortuna*, tho' it be a very indifferent one, did not only paſs Muſter, but pleas'd a great part of the Audience, ſince it reviv'd their Spirits, and made the Act end brisk and lively. However, this Miſtake is not to be imputed to *Scarlatti*, but the Author of the Words, who did not give the Compoſer room to end the Act as he ought. The third Act is the worſt of all, and ſinks in every Scene. The Air *Suſſurrando il Zeffiretto*, &c. tho' it was very well Sung, yet it's much too long, and do's the Act a great deal of prejudice. *Demetrius*'s *Soliloqui* is utterly improper, and perfectly tires the Audience; ſo that as this Opera begins Great and Maſterly, it ends Low and Poorly. No one knows what's become of *Marius* and *Cleartes*; as *Deidamia* is lead out to ſuffer for her Treaſon, *Demetrius* being a true Knight Errant, on a ſudden quits his former Miſtreſs, for whoſe ſake he had made

made ſuch a ſtir in the preceding Acts, and conſents to Marry *Deidamia*, on purpoſe to ſave her from the Gallows. There are ſome other Improprieties in this Opera, ſo that it's to be wiſh'd, the Perſon who has taken ſo much Pains with it already, wou'd add a finiſhing Stroke; a little more will make it a perfect Piece, it being already the beſt we have on the *Engliſh* Stage, abounding in extraordinary good Airs without one that can be call'd mean or indifferent.

Theſe Inconveniences ought to admoniſh thoſe, who undertake to write Words for an Opera, to be more careful in the Conduct of it; ſince the poor Compoſer is obliged to follow their Deſign, without the Liberty of remedying any Irregularities, his Buſineſs being only to ſet the Words as he finds 'em to the beſt Muſick he can, and which *Scarlatti* has exceedingly well done in the fore-mentioned Opera of *Pyrrhus* and *Demetrius*.

Clotilda.

Some time after *Pyrrhus* and *Demetrius*, another Opera call'd *Clotilda* appear'd on the Stage prepar'd by the ſame *Swiſs* Count that had the Management of *Thomyris*. This conſiſted of much ſuch a Medley of Airs, or rather worſe than the former: The Count took all imaginable Care to make it cut down *Pyrrhus* and *Demetrius*.

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I'm obliged to confeſs I know not what Judgment to make of this Opera, there are ſeveral very good Airs compos'd by *Bononcini*, and other Maſters; but they are like rich Embroideries on an ill-faſhion'd Coat, which ſerve only to expoſe the Ignorance of the Taylor, that knew not how to make a right uſe of ſuch coſtly Trimmings. It may be ſaid of this Opera, that it has no Recitative at all, ſince that which pretends to be ſuch deſerves not to be mentioned, ſeeming rather to be made out of meer Spite to the Count, and his Deſign, than for any other Purpoſe: So that I think the Compoſer played a very prudent Part, when he endeavoured ſo induſtriouſly to have his Name conceal'd.

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This has brought me in a manner to the Concluſion of my preſent Diſcourſe, which I ſhall cloſe with my Opinion upon Opera's in general, ſo far as they relate to the *Engliſh* Stage, as I have declared my Judgment in particular upon thoſe before-mentioned. I am ſo vain as to think I have been very candid in my Obſervations, as having declared my ſelf without any Prejudice or Paſſion, and ſquaring my Judgment by ſuch Opera's, as have met with the greateſt Applauſe in *Italy*, which help'd me in forming my Cenſure upon thoſe among us: I ſhall add ſomething by way of Concluſion, which I think neceſſary to render 'em more perfect and entertaining.

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Place, that is not able to make a new one himſelf upon occaſion. Among an hundred Habits a Man may chance to find but one fit for his own Body; this is too long, that too wide, the Colour of the third is improper for the Perſon that is to wear it: Theſe are Inconveniencies no one but a Taylor can Remedy, who is as able to make a new Suit, as patch up an old one. If this was a thing to be done by any one that had the Confidence to undertake it, what Neceſſity is there of waſting ſo much time in the Study of Compoſition? Since there are Millions of Airs in *Italy* that might ſerve, only by picking out ſuch for one Country, as had been received with Applauſe in another: But it's evident, that the ſame Compoſitions have not met with the ſame Reception in all Places alike. Thoſe Pieces of Muſick, that are highly applauded at *Venice*, have paſs'd unobſerv'd at *Rome*, *Bolognia*, *Naples*, and other Parts of *Italy*; ſo that the very Climate may be ſaid to have an Influence upon it; and an experienced Compoſer, that is well acquainted with the Taſte of the Country wherein he lives, is the only Perſon proper to prevent ſuch Inconveniencies.

The

The *Swiſs* Opera's (for ſo give me leave to call *Thomyris* and *Clotilda*) are of all others the moſt unlikely to pleaſe; and I can't but wonder how the Town came to encourage a Man that cheated 'em ſo palpably of their Mony, by ſelling that for his own, which he had not the leaſt hand in. Such a Medley may be compar'd to a Picture form'd out of ſeveral different Figures, every one of which was drawn by a different Hand, without any Communication one with the other: Some of theſe Figures are good in their kind, others indifferent, and the reſt ſtark nought. Theſe Pieces clapt together, will certainly prove an hideous Sight, eſpecially if the Perſon who undertakes to prepare the Ground, which muſt give a due Force to the whole Compoſition, knows nothing of the Art; and I am verily perſwaded the meaneſt Dawber in Town will ſcorn to claim ſuch a Piece of Workmanſhip for his own, as knowing it can be of no manner of Reputation to him. Opera's will never comé into Perfection here 'till theſe ſort of Monſters are forbid the Stage: But I'm of Opinion the *Engliſh* will in time grow more refined in their Taſte for Muſick, and won't ſtand in need of my Exhortations to quell this Peſt that annoys the Republick of Muſick,

with as much Bravery as their Anceſtors heretofore deſtroy'd the Wolves that had for a long time infeſted the Nation.

No Opera's therefore ought to be receiv'd but ſuch as are intire, and of one Author, or at leaſt prepar'd by a Perſon that is capable of uniting different Styles ſo artfully as to make 'em paſs for one.

But what will moſt contribute to the Dignity of Opera's, is, that beſides the Addition of ſome more Decorations to thoſe we have already, all the Words ought to be ſung in *Italian*, being a Language the moſt proper for Muſick of any other in *Europe*: Muſick ſeems to have been born with it, and conſequently loſes much of its Native Beauty, when it appears in a Foreign Dreſs. Beſides this, the Compoſers ought to conſult the Capacities of the ſeveral Performers, and dreſs out their Parts accordingly: This being a material Point, and indiſpenſably neceſſary to fix Opera's upon a laſting Foundation. They ought likewiſe to avoid a too ſervile Imitation of the *Italian* Compoſitions; ſince an Opera with no more than ten or twelve good Airs in it will paſs in *Italy*, whereas here

here in *England* five or ſix bad ones are ſufficient to damn the whole Compoſition; the Taſte of the Town in this particular being ſo exceeding nice, and tender. Inſomuch that of all the Opera's that are at preſent in *Italy*, I don't think one of 'em will go down here without ſome Alterations; *Camilla* indeed is to be excepted, though probably had not that been the firſt it would not have paſs'd free from Cenſure.

There are but few Maſters capable of compoſing an Opera in *Italy*, and much fewer in *England*. There the People having a ſettled Inclination for Muſick, every little thing pleaſes and contents 'em; whereas our Acquaintance with it is but of a freſh Date, ſo that we are not yet grown ſo partial to it as to excuſe any of its Defects, but expect every thing in the higheſt Perfection. 'Tis not enough if the Air be lively and diverting, unleſs there be ſomething beautiful in the Inſtrumental Part alſo. There muſt be a ſort of Conteſt between the Voice, and the Inſtrument, and both muſt contend for the Superiority. The Airs ought to be ſtudied without being ſtiff, melancholy without being heavy, and lively without being trivial: There ought to be ſomething new and uncommon, ſweet and entertain-

tertaining in every part. In ſhort, an Opera that wou'd be receiv'd here ought to be in ſome Meaſure an Extract of the beſt Muſick in the World, all of a Piece, without degenerating into any thing low or trifling. Upon which Account, a Compoſer that might make an Opera in *Italy* in a Month's time, can't compleat ſuch a one as I think fit for the *Engliſh* Stage in leſs than twelve. So that it is not to be wonder'd, if they, who have entertain'd another Opinion of the *Engliſh* Taſte, have found themſelves deceiv'd, and have miſcarried in their Undertakings: And I look on it as an undoubted Maxim in Muſick (the Buſineſs of which is to regale the Ear, as it is that of Painting to entertain the Eye) that whatever is Good ought to pleaſe, and whatever pleaſes ought to be eſteem'd as Good.

FINIS.